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MEISTER ECKEHART

BY

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OF THE

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INTRODUCTION

Perhaps no era in the history of the latter Middle Ages offers so many and such various problems as that extending from the middle of the thirteenth to the middle of the fourteenth century, from 1250 to 1350. It was a time of great politico-religious unrest for the greater part of Europe, but especially for the Holy Roman Empire. The struggles between the Empire and the Papacy, which resulted in almost continual wars and interdicts, were followed in Germany by the Great Interregnum, the darkest period of her history. The Interregnum was in reality an age of lawlessness and universal anarchy. "Might over right," or, as it was then termed, the "Faustrecht", became the ruling principle.

The ascension of Rudolf of Hapsburg to the imperial throne brought a period of comparative peace to the afflicted states, when in 1313 another double election set up as rival kings Frederick the Fair and Louis the Bavarian. Both were crowned: Frederick at the wrong place, Bonn, but by the right person, the Archbishop of Cologne; Louis at the right place, Aix la Chapelle, but by the wrong person, the Archbishop of Mainz. Renewed civil war, renewed struggle between the Empire and the Papacy, is the sad record of the next thirty years. Excommunication and interdict followed in their train; these latter often weighed heavier upon the people than even the stress of war. Infants remained without baptism, Mass was not celebrated, the sacred offices for the dead ceased, and in some cities priests were forced to continue their functions in spite of the interdict or go into banishment.

The long conflict between the Pope and the Emperor and the prevailing lawlessness of the Interregnum were not without their influence on the clergy. We have but to turn to the history of the councils and synods of those

days, and everywhere we see how the Church fought against luxury, immorality, and avarice among the clergy. There can be little doubt that this licentiousness was the source of many degrading vices. Numbers of ecclesiastics, although they were continually reminded of their obligation to observe the law of celibacy and to preserve in their person a dignity becoming their state, continued to be in a large measure, the slaves of their passions, worldly minded, lovers of pleasure, avaricious, and simoniacal.[1] The bestowal of several benefices on the same person or on unworthy candidates, sometimes even on young children, was followed by most baneful results.

This sad picture, however, is not without its bright side. There were many ecclesiastics distinguished for eminent virtues to whose efforts and influence may be traced many institutions worthy of the undying gratitude of mankind.[2] It was at this period, too, that the mendicant orders, the Franciscans and the Dominicans, foremost in their devotion to the religious instruction of the people, exercised a powerful influence for good on the masses. The people, perplexed by never-ending conflicts and longing, in general, for religious guides, flocked to the Friars to nourish themselves with the word of God.

Everywhere the evils of the time caused more serious natures to turn with an intense longing toward nobler ideals, toward a deeper Christian spirit, toward some higher principle which might direct them, even in the midst of daily turmoil, in their efforts to keep alive an interior life, to concentrate themselves more on their spiritual needs and thus produce a truer spirit of piety and a stricter morality. Many renounced the world to dedicate themselves to God in the religious life. The convents in particular became so many centers of mysticism whose inmates, especially the

[1] Cf. Michael, Geschichte des deutschen Volkes II, p. 15 ff. Freiburg, 1899; also Hefele, Konziliengeschichte II. Freiburg, 1890.

[2] Alzog, J., Manual of Church History II, p. 649. Cincinnati, 1902.

nuns, zealously gave themselves up to a life of contemplation. Among many others mention must be made of the Dominican nuns of Adelhausen near Freiburg in Breisgau; of Unterlinden near Colmar; of Schönsteinbach in Alsace; of Töss, Diessenhofen, and Öftenbach in Switzerland; of Engelthal in Franconia; to these must be added the Cistercian nuns of Helfta, among whom were the famous abbess, Gertrude of Hackeborn,[3] with her sister, St. Mechtilde, and St. Gertrude; also the Beguines, Mechtilde of Magdeburg, noted for her mystic work, "Das fliessende Licht der Gottheit", Luitgard of Bavaria, and Christina of Stommeln.[4] Thus, while the Franciscans, Berchtold of Regensburg and David of Augsburg, preached to the masses who suffered so severely under the repeated interdicts, the nuns enjoyed in the solitude of the cloister frequent mystic communings with their God. It was in the Rhineland, however, that religious experiences were more intense and manifold, and that the greatest numbers of devout souls were found who aspired to an entire purification of the heart, and to union with God; and who, therefore, submitted voluntarily to the sharpest austerities, to poverty and humility, to annihilation of pride and self-will, as a means of approaching nearer to God.

The Golden Age of scholasticism was rapidly declining, when there grew up on German soil a particular branch of mysticism, which has, even down to recent times, exerted an influence on German thought and poetry. This German mysticism was developed chiefly by means of sermons. The perfecter, if not also the author, of this development, was Meister Eckehart, a Dominican monk, who drew his matter largely from the doctrines of earlier writers, particularly from the Pseudo-Areopagite and St. Augustine, as well as from the best theologians of the

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[3]This Gertrude is often mistaken for St. Gertrude, who is sometimes called the Great.

[4]Michael, op. cit., pp. 164-211.

Middle Ages, equally renowned as scholastics and as mystics. Foremost among these latter were St. Bernard, the Victorines, St. Bonaventure, Albertus Magnus, and St. Thomas Aquinas.[5] These names are continually encountered up and down the pages of Meister Eckehart. In fact, it was more especially the Victorines who paved the way for the mysticism of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Although Eckehart's principal aim in his sermons and treatises was to edify and arouse the people, there is no trace in his works of the fanatical zeal of the reformer pointing the finger of scorn at the moral ills of the day. He does not so much ignore these evils, as he rises above them like one animated by a purely theoretical interest.[6]

The school of Eckehart produced in the fourteenth century some of the brightest clusters of names in the history of mysticism. In Ruysbroek, Bl. Henry Suso, Tauler, and the unknown author of the *Theologia Germanica* introspective mysticism is seen at its best. This must not be understood to mean that they improved upon the philosophical system of Eckehart, or that they are entirely free from the dangerous tendencies which have been found in his works. On the speculative side they add nothing of value, and none of them rivals Eckehart in depth of intellect. But there is in their works an unfaltering conviction that communion with God must be a fact of experience and not only a philosophical theory.[7]

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[5]Hergenröther, Kirchengeschichte II, p. 497. Freiburg, 1904.
[6]Überweg, History of Philosophy I, p. 469. New York, 1901.
[7]W. R. Inge, Christian Mysticism, p. 167. New York, 1899.

CHAPTER I

THE LIFE OF MEISTER ECKEHART

The attempt to gather the necessary data for the biography of any of the great mystics is rendered more than usually difficult by the reticence of the mystics themselves, who, though ready enough to reveal their spiritual experiences in their works, are exceedingly reserved as to the facts of their private lives. In fact, one of their principal aims is to be unknown and forgotten. The difficulty is still greater if the mystic is a member of some religious order. Although the outward life of the religious is regulated in almost every detail by the rules and constitutions, yet the rich inner life can often be learned only from his writings and we know but too well that such conjectures are always more or less subjective. These facts account no doubt for the little we know of Meister Eckehart's[1] life and for much of the uncertainty concerning even that little.

The early life of Eckehart is so shrouded in mystery that not even the time of his birth is exactly known. It is, however, generally admitted that he was born about the year 1260. The place of his birth remained long an open question; some, like Preger and Quétif-Echard, sought it in Thuringia, others with Jundt in Strasburg. This problem has been definitely settled by the great Dominican savant, Henry Seuse Denifle, whose learned researches[2] prove that Eckehart was a Thuringian.

In the first place, Denifle cites the manuscript of the Amploniana of Erfurt, F. 36, on the reverse side of whose second fly-leaf is a Latin sermon of Meister Eckehart which concludes with the following information: "This

[1]This method of spelling Eckehart has been adopted after the example of Denifle and Büttner as the older and more correct form. The dissyllabic Eckhart was introduced with the printed edition of Tauler's sermons and has since been followed by many writers.

[2]Archiv für Literatur-und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters V, p. 351. Berlin, 1888.

sermon was delivered by Meister Eckehart de Hochheim of Paris on the feast of Blessed Augustine.'"[3] To judge by its character, the manuscript must belong to the beginning of the fourteenth century, whereas its inner evidence, such as the manner of treating scriptural texts and its relation to St. Thomas, all point to Eckehart's earlier years. Hence the manuscript gains in importance as a contemporaneous, and, therefore, highly valued, document. According to authentic evidence there was only one Meister Eckehart in Paris at the beginning of the fourteenth century and he must have been born either in a place called Hochheim or of a family of the same name. It was, moreover, customary in the Middle Ages, to add to the person's name that of the city or at least of the diocese in which he was born. Furthermore, Denifle discovered in the convent of the Holy Cross belonging to the Cistercian nuns at Gotha an old document dated May 19, 1305, in which mention is made of a deceased "Sir Eckardus, Knight, known as de Hochheim,"[4] a benefactor, who had donated a tract of land on condition that the nuns pray for the repose of his soul and that of his consort. This document goes to prove that a family of the name of Hochheim probably dwelt or at least possessed some property near Gotha; there is at present a village of Hochheim a few miles north of Gotha. The titles *dominus* and *miles* show that this Eckehart of Hochheim belonged to a knightly family.

Another fact worthy of notice is that the document in question bears, besides the convent seal, a second one which is that of Meister Eckehart. The deed concludes with the following words: "In proof whereof and for a more complete memorial of our venerable Father, Meister Eckehart of Paris, Provincial of the Friar Preachers for the Province of Saxony, we have caused this deed to be

[3] Iste sermo sic est reportatus ab ore magistri Echardi de Hochheim die beati Augustini Parisius.

[4] Dominus Eckardus miles dictus de Hochheim.

the better authenticated by affixing thereto the seals of our convent.'"[5] There can be no doubt that this Meister Eckehart is the same as the subject of this biography. The only possible reason why Eckehart's name should appear in the document would be his close relationship to the deceased; it is quite probable that he was his son and, therefore, signed the deed as the representative of the family.

Eckehart's childhood and youth were lived at a time when Albertus Magnus and St. Thomas Aquinas had reached the summit of their power and fame, and when the Order of Preachers had entered on its most brilliant epoch. Is it surprising then that the order with its great aims exerted so powerful an influence on the youthful heart and mind of Eckehart? We do not know at what age he resolved to dedicate himself to God in the Order of St. Dominic, but according to the constitution of the Order he must have completed his fifteenth year. It was likewise customary to enter the monastery nearest one's native place, which, in the case of Eckehart, was that of Erfurt.

He had now to pursue the regular course laid down by the statutes of the General Chapters which ordained that the young novice begin his regular studies only after his second year in the monastery. The *Studium logicale* or the *trivium,* grammar, rhetoric, and dialectics, formed a three years' course; after this two more years were devoted to the *Studium naturale* or the *quadrivium,* arithmetic, mathematics, astronomy, and music. These studies served as prerequisites for that of sacred theology to which they led. The first year of theology embraced the *Studium biblicum,* and the next two the study of the *Sentences* or Dogma. For this latter the German province

[5] In cuius rei fidem et memoriam ampliorem venerabilis patris magistri Eckardi Parisiensis, provincialis fratrum ordinis Predicatorum per provinciam Saxonie et nostri conventus sigillorum appensione hanc literam fecimus firmiter communiri. Datum anno Domini MCCCV, XIII, kl. Junii.

had at that time probably but one school which, it is thought, was at Strasburg. After their course in theology the students were promoted to the sacred priesthood. The more promising of these young Levites were sent after their ordination to what might be called the "high school" or *Studium generale* of the order. At this period the Dominicans had five such schools, the most renowned of them being that of St. James at Paris, while Cologne ranked next. The course of instruction lasted three years. Although the system of Peter Lombard still dominated in the schools, nevertheless at Cologne the spirit of Albertus Magnus and of St. Thomas Aquinas, who had taught there for several years, was still felt. In fact, Eckehart's first mystic work, "Rede der Unterscheidunge," shows the influence and recalls in many ways Albert's "De adhaerendo Deo".

The Dominican regulations forbade anyone to be chosen prior who had not been lector for at least three years. Where Eckehart exercised this latter office is not known. One of the earliest documentary references to Eckehart is the title of a treatise known as the "Rede der Unterscheidunge":[6] "These are the conferences on discernment, which the Vicar of Thuringia, the Prior of Erfurt, Brother Eckehart of the Order of Preachers, gave to those of his children who asked him many questions in these conferences, as they sat together for collation."[7] It is an open question as to when Eckehart held the twofold office of vicar and prior. All we know is that it must have been previous to 1298, for the General Chapter of that year ordained that in future both offices might not be filled simultaneously by the same person. Preger[8] asserts that Eckehart had been lector for three years before he

[6] Pfeiffer, Deutsche Mystiker II, p. 543. Leipzig, 1857.

[7] Daz sint die rede der unterscheidunge, die der Vicarius von Düringen, der Prior von Erfort, bruoder Eckehart predier ordens mit solichen kinden hete, diu in dirre rede frâgeten vil dinges, dô sie sâzen in collationibus mit einander.

[8] Preger, Geschichte der deutschen Mystik im Mittelalter I, p. 328. Leipzig, 1874.

was nominated prior. We have, however, no certainty in this matter, as it was not until 1291 that the Order laid down the new regulation, that no one who had not been lector for three years could hold the office of prior, and it is not known whether it was before or after this new decree that Eckehart was elected prior of Erfurt.

If we know but little of Eckehart's exterior labors during the period when he was Prior and Vicar in Thuringia, we have in the "Conferences" a rich source of information regarding his inner life and his activity as a teacher. It was customary for the monks during collation to question the Prior on various topics pertaining to christian and religious life. In his answers to his spiritual children Eckehart quite unconsciously and simply betrays his deepest aspirations, the hidden springs of his activity. A few extracts chosen at random will suffice to prove this. Speaking of true obedience he lays down the great principle of St. Francis de Sales, "Ask nothing and refuse nothing," as follows: " 'I want this or that' is never found in true obedience; for true obedience is a forgetfulness of self; therefore, the best prayer that one can make is not, 'O Lord, give me this virtue or that,' but rather, 'O Lord, give me only what Thou wishest and do with me whatever Thou wilt.'"[9] Everywhere throughout the *Conferences,* no matter what the question proposed, the keynote is always complete submission to God's will in all things, great or small, often embodying, as it does, great self-renunciation even to death of self. "Verily if a person gave up a kingdom or the whole world and did not renounce himself, he gave up nothing."[10] "Adhere to God and God and all virtues will adhere to you."[11] How this is to be accomplished the following passage explains: "A man cannot learn this by either flying from or avoiding things and then entering into exterior solitude into

[9]Pfeiffer, 544, 10.
[10]Pfeiffer, 545, 59.
[11]Pfeiffer, 547, 7.

which he always can enter, no matter where or with whom he may be."[12] "The will is entire and right, when it is without any properties, when it has renounced itself, and has formed and moulded itself on that of God."[13] "Many say, we have a good will, but they have not God's will; they want their will and want to teach Our Lord what to do."[14] "We must learn to leave ourselves until nothing of self remains."[15] "Whatever God shall send, we must take it as coming directly from Him, as best for us, and after that remain in peace."[16] "Do not place sanctity in doing, but in being. Works do not sanctify us, we ought rather to sanctify them."[17] A clear insight into the human heart is betrayed by the following: "And thus it may prove at times more troublesome to suppress a word than to refrain from all conversation. And thus it is far harder to bear a little contemptuous word, which is really nothing in itself, than a big blow to which one has exposed oneself; and one often finds it more difficult to be recollected amongst men than to live in solitude, and frequently it costs more to give up a trifle than something important, and to practise some little act than to accomplish a deed considered very great."[18]

The next definite and reliable information still extant regarding Meister Eckehart pertains to his first sojourn at Paris. A treatise of Stephen de Salahanco, "The Four Brethren through whom God distinguished the Order of Preachers," of which we possess at present only a revision by Bernard Guidonis, recounts in the third part, "concerning illustrious members," eighty-eight Dominicans who received the Doctorate in Paris. As Denifle proves,[19] this roll beginning with the thirty-second

[12]Pfeiffer, 549, 17.
[13]Pfeiffer, 553, 7.
[14]Pfeiffer, 555, 1.
[15]Pfeiffer, 571, 14.
[16]Pfeiffer, 572, 3.
[17]Pfeiffer, 546, 22.
[18]Pfeiffer, 562, 39.
[19]Denifle, Quellen zur Gelehrtengeschichte des Predigerordens. Archiv II, p. 183. Berlin, 1886.

name was continued by Bernard Guidonis. The fifty-second is "Brother Eckehart, a German, was created Master A. D. 1302. He was confirmed as provincial prior of Saxony in the General Chapter of Toulouse A. D. 1304."[20] This document proves first that Eckehart received the title of Master in Paris A. D. 1302, and secondly, that two years later the General Chapter of the Order of Toulouse confirmed his election as the first provincial of the Province of Saxony. According to Pummerer[21] all other accounts that Preger gives of Meister Eckehart's first stay in Paris are mere conjectures. Owing to the conflict between Boniface VIII and the University of Paris, it was not the Pope but the Faculty of the University that conferred the Doctorate on Eckehart, not because he was opposed to Boniface, but because, being a foreigner, he occupied a neutral position. It is morally certain that if Eckehart had shown the least hostility to the Papacy, the Order would never have nominated him to the high post of provincial.

Before Meister Eckehart, as he was now styled, could enter upon his third year of teaching, he was recalled to Germany, where the extraordinary expansion of the Dominicans rendered a division of the Order necessary. That he must have shown himself worthy of the trust placed in him, is proved by the fact that the first provincial chapter held that same year 1303, elected him its first Provincial Prior; he was re-elected in 1307 at the Chapter of Minden.

It was during Eckehart's first term of office that the General Chapter held at Paris in 1306 lodged certain complaints against the Provincials of Germany and Saxony on account of some irregularities among the ter-

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[20]Frater Aychardus, Theutonicus, fuit licenciatus anno domini MCCCII°. Hic fuit confirmatus in priorem provincialem Saxonie in generali capitulo tholosano anno dom. MCCCIIII°.

[21]Pummerer, Der gegenwärtige Stand der Eckehartforschung. Jahresbericht des öffentlichen Privatgymnasiums an der Stella Matutina zu Feldkirch., 1903, p. 12.

tiaries. Both were given directions to remove these disorders before the feast of the Purification A. D. 1307, or to fast two days each week until this duty was accomplished. Preger surmises there was question of heresy among the tertiaries, and adds: "We know that the tertiaries of the Mendicant Orders were sometimes during this period designated as Beghards and Beguines whom they resembled. Among the Beghards, the Brethren of the Free Spirit had a great following and the tertiaries themselves were infected by their doctrines."[22] Preger then concludes that Eckehart secretly sympathized with the heretics and therefore took no steps to prevent the disorder. But if such had really been the case, it is hardly conceivable that Eckehart should have been reelected provincial and above all been deputed by Aymerich de Placentia in the General Chapter of Strasburg as his Vicar-General to Bohemia with extensive powers to reform the several relaxed monasteries of that country. As Eckehart held at the same time the office of Provincial of Saxony, this mission to Bohemia was evidently of brief duration.

At the expiration of his second term as provincial he was sent by the General, Aymerich de Placentia, as lecturer to Paris.[23] Here he resumed his lectures on the Sentences. Of this period nothing certain is known. That he spent a longer or a shorter time in Strasburg as professor of sacred theology is evidenced by the Register of the City of Strasburg (III. 236) where we find the entry: 1314 Magister Eckehardus professor sacre theologie. He was also appointed ordinary preacher and many of his sermons of those days are still extant. The Latin sermons he addressed to his religious brethren either in the monastery or at chapters of the Order. Several convents of nuns and some Beguinages were placed

[22]Preger, op. cit., p. 338.

[23]Fuit absolutus apud Neapolim anno Domini MCCCXI, et missus Parisius ad legendum. Martène-Durand, Veterum SS. coll. VI, 343. Cf. Archiv V, p. 349.

under his spiritual direction; to them as well as to the people, who flocked to the churches, he preached in the vernacular.

Preger says that Eckehart was transferred to Frankfort some time after 1317.[24] He bases his statement on a letter of the General Herveus[25] to the Priors of Worms and Mainz, in which he directs them to investigate certain facts that reached him regarding Eckehart, the Prior of Frankfort, and Theodoric of St. Martin. They were accused of holding familiar intercourse with evil persons—*malis familiaritatibus.* Preger asserts that according to the constitutions of the Order *mala familiaritas* signifies those suspected of heresy, that is the heretical Beghards and Beguines so numerous in those days. Denifle proves the utter falsity of these assertions. His facts are drawn from the same document which Preger has so entirely misconstrued. Let us listen to the learned Dominican: "A proof that Eckehart was guilty of familiar intercourse with heretics, was supposed to be found in a letter of the General Herveus to the Priors of Worms and Mainz. . . . What was it customary in the Order to denote by *mala familiaritas?* Perhaps intercourse or friendship with heretics? Anything but this; it was rather evil, scandalous relations with women. . . . The technical term *mala familiaritas* was substituted in the year 1264 or 1266 for the older expression *suspecta familiaritas mulieris* and is identical with it. Granted that Meister Eckehart was the Prior of Frankfort, the aforesaid letter of Herveus would still supply no

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[24]Preger, op. cit., p. 352. Ch. Schmidt makes the same statement in Etudes sur le mysticisme allemand au XIV siècle. (Mémoires de l'Académie des sciences morales et politiques II, p. 238.) The same statement is repeated by A. L. McMahon in the Catholic Encyclopedia V, p. 274.

[25]Habui etiam delationes graves de fratre Ekardo nostro priore apud Frankefort, et de fratre Theodorico de sancto Martino, de malis familiaritatibus et suspectis, et idcirco de ipsis duobus signanter inquiratis sollicite, et secundum quod invenerits eos culpabiles, puniatis et corrigatis, sicut iudicaveritis expedire ordinis honestati. Archiv II, p. 618.

evidence whatever for the assumption that Eckehart held any intercourse with heretics, as absolutely nothing of the kind occurs in the above writing. The accusation, as we have seen, refers to unlawful relations with women.

"But is Meister Eckehart identical with *frater Ekardus,* who was Prior of Frankfort? Where is the proof? There is only a single one, namely, a similarity of name! But was there at that time in all Germany only *one* Dominican named Eckehart? By no means; we know of at least three: Meister Eckehart, Eckehart the Younger, who was not Master, and who died in 1367, and the lector, Eckehart Rube. Similarly there may have been some other Dominican of the same name. . . . Is there such an accusation, as we have mentioned, known concerning Meister Eckehart? Not at all; on the contrary, we have seen that he could publicly, in presence of the Inquisitors, boast of his reputation and say, 'I have always detested every kind of immoral conduct."[26] Eckehart was never molested on account of his morals or his conduct. On the other hand, we see him spoken of as 'the holy Master,' 'vir sanctus' . . . Is he really identical with the Prior of Frankfort? It is very improbable, and this all the more so, as the prior is simply called frater, whereas if Meister Eckehart were the one implied, the title of Master would not be wanting; and as no other document than the above mentioned letter of Herveus can be produced as evidence of Eckehart's sojourn in Frankfort, it is therefore extremely doubtful if he ever was in Frankfort."[27]

How long Eckehart remained in Strasburg cannot be known with any certainty. All we are sure of is, that some time previous to 1326 he was sent to fill the chair of dogmatic theology at Cologne, one of the most influential and honorable posts of his Order in Germany. With his labors in Cologne we reach the closing years of his untiring activity. As professor he exerted a profound

[26] Denifle, opus cit., II p. 631.
[27] Ibid., 618.

influence on the younger generation of his Order, and as preacher he powerfully moved the throngs who ordinarily filled the church. The bull of John XXII that condemns some of his doctrines, as well as the papal letter to the Archbishop of Cologne ordering the publication of the bull, speak of Eckehart as doctor of Sacred Scripture and professor of the Friar Preachers;[28] in the latter writing the Pope discriminates between preaching, writing, and teaching, (predicasse, scripsisse et dogmatizasse).

At the General Chapter of the Order in Venice A. D. 1325 complaints were made that some of the brethren of the German Province, when preaching to the illiterate common people, spoke on such profound topics as could easily lead them to heresy. [29] Preger surmises that here the first steps were taken against Eckehart's teaching.[30] Denifle on the assumption that these complaints are too general, believes they bear on the interdict which the conflict between the Pope and Louis the Bavarian brought on Germany, especially as the minutes of the Chapter joined this complaint to that which accuses some of the friars in Germany of notable negligence in publications concerning the process of the Pope against Louis of Bavaria.[31] However, a careful perusal of Eckehart's sermons and those of his disciples shows but too plainly how easily they could prove a stumbling block to the simple-minded; and as S. Deutsch says,[32] an unprejudiced examination of the aforesaid words must bring them to bear upon errors of faith rather than upon the political conflict. Nothing certain, however, is known in the matter, not even the result of the investigation of the Vicar, Gervasius of Angers. Probably it is to this examination that

[28]Ekardus nomine, doctorque ut fertur sacre pagine, ac professor ordinis fratrum Predicatorum. Ibid., 636.

[29]In praedicatione vulgari quaedam personis vulgaribus ac rudibus in sermonibus proponuntur quae possunt auditores facile deducere in errorem.

[30]Preger, opus cit., p. 355.

[31]Denifle, opus cit., II, p. 624.

[32]Deutsch, Meister Eckehart. Realencyclopedie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche V, p. 144. Leipzig, 1898.

a passage in the treatise "The Two Ways" refers, in which Eckehart begs his hearers not to make their friends acquainted with the book, which is very difficult, and especially since he has been *forbidden* to disseminate it.[33] Forbidden, not because it contained actual heresy, but for the reason he himself alleges, that it is difficult and this above all for the simple minds of his hearers, whom it might lead into error.

In the same year 1325 accusations against the Friar Preachers in Germany were carried to the Papal Court. John XXII appointed two Dominicans, Benedict de Come and Nicholas of Strasburg, vicars of the General and visitors of the German Province, and charged them to look into the affair. Preger holds for certain that this letter of the Pope is directed against Meister Eckehart, but Denifle demonstrates from the same document[34] that no direct complaints were made on account of erroneous doctrines, but rather censures of irregularities within the communities themselves. From the documents, which Denifle was the first to publish,[35] we learn what these irregularities were, namely: a spirit of discontent; non-observance of religious discipline, even by the superiors themselves; molestation of those who kept to strict observance; abuses which the vicars are called upon to correct. Hence the papal commission does not apply specifically to Eckehart, nor above all to any heresy among the Dominicans.[36]

Eckehart had completed his system and given a full exposition of it before the last year of his life, when he was suspected of heresy. There is not the slightest trace of a document, which permits even the supposition that before 1326 he aroused the least opposition, provoked the

[33]Vnd sind daz puch ist selb schwer vnd vnbekant manigen lewten dar vmb sol man es nicht gemain machen, des pit ich ewch durch got, wann es ward mir auch verpoten.

[34]Denifle, op. cit., IV, p. 314. Pummerer, op, cit., p. 21.

[35]Denifle, ibid.

[36]Aktenstücke zu Meister Eckehart's Process. Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum, XXIX, p. 260.

least inquiry. Previous to the learned researches of Denifle, all conclusions bearing on this question rest partly on combination, partly on false premises. Since the days of Ch. Schmidt it has been believed that Eckehart was in close touch with the Beghards of Strasburg. These had been condemned by John of Dürckheim, bishop of that city, who called the attention of his clergy to seven very dangerous errors of the Beghards and Beguines of the diocese, and forbade every communication with the heretics, even to the bestowal of alms. According to Lasson, these condemned errors were, for the most part, drawn from the writings of Eckehart; and yet without any molestation he continued his preaching at Strasburg till after 1322! But where, we ask with Denifle, is the document that can furnish even the smallest clue that Eckehart was ever harassed by the Bishop of Strasburg? If such had been the case, how could he have publicly declared before the Inquisitors of Cologne on January 24, 1327, that his Order has been at no time since its foundation dishonored by the heresy of any friar in the province of Germany?[37] How could he have appealed to the good reputation which he had ever enjoyed in the opinion of good men and of his community?[38] What could the suppression of the actual facts have availed him with Inquisitors who were anything but favorably disposed towards him, not to mention the circumstance that the Bishop of Strasburg was still alive to witness, if necessary, to his former errors?

[37]Nunquam a tempore sue fundationis nec in aliquo simplici fratre in provincia Theutonie fuit de heresi infamatus.

[38]Iudicio bonorum hominum et communium.

CHAPTER II

MEISTER ECKEHART AND THE INQUISITION

It was only at the close of his life in 1326 that Eckehart's doctrine was first called into question by Henry of Virneburg, Archbishop of Cologne. According to some authorities the Archbishop forwarded complaints against Eckehart's doctrine to the papal court, but without any effect. From Eckehart's protest we learn that his cause had been examined by Nicholas of Strasburg and that he had been wholly exonerated. Nicholas, in virtue of the authority which John XXII had conferred upon him as vicar and visitor, regarded himself as authorized to interfere with the process begun by Henry of Virneburg against Eckehart. He took the cause into his own hands, as much to preserve the reputation of the Order as to shield Eckehart from designing men. He commanded under pain of excommunication that if any friar in the monastery knew anything whatever pertaining to the process against Eckehart, which the honor of the Order demanded should be revealed, he should communicate the same to him. As will be noticed shortly, it seems all did not render the required obedience. As soon as Nicholas was in possession of the necessary data, he at once began the official investigation. At its close he gave a verdict in favor of Eckehart; nevertheless, the Archbishop formally summoned Eckehart to appear before his tribunal on January 31, 1327. Henry then appointed as Inquisitors the rivals of Eckehart, two Franciscan theologians of Cologne. This was an open challenge to the Dominicans and caused the entire Order to take sides with Eckehart. He did not wait for the day set by the commissioners, but appeared before that time, on January 24th, accompanied by five of his brethren and several other monks for the reading of his protest to the Inquisitors, which his confrère, Conrad of Halberstadt,

did in his name.[1] After asserting that in accusing him of heresy they had accused his Order, in which from its very foundation no one had ever been suspected of heresy, he protests in energetic terms against the disgraceful manner in which the Inquisitors had proceeded against him, by their arbitrary and shameful dragging out of the whole affair, which could have been concluded before the middle of the previous year. Conscious of his innocence, which he repeatedly affirms, he complains of the annoying and harsh treatment of the commissioners in summoning him so often and without any necessity, notwithstanding that he always declared his readiness to obey the law and the Church of God. He reproaches his judges with the scandal given to clerics and the laity by this long-drawn-out process and indignantly protests against their demand of a recantation before they are able to convict him of heresy. Above all he bitterly upbraids the Inquisitors with citing suspicious members of his Order to give evidence against him, because these latter hoped in this way to escape the well-deserved punishment due their own irregularities, and with lending a readier ear to these false witnesses and their statements than to his innocence.[2] Eckehart then affirms his obedience to the Church, declares he submits his doctrine to her authoritative judgment, and recalls any proposition that might be contrary to her dogma; an attitude which he preserved to the end of his life. After again emphasizing the illegality of the whole process, for his case had been legally closed by Nicholas of Strasburg and could not, therefore, be judged by another court, he closes his protest with an appeal to

[1] For the complete text see Denifle, op. cit. II, p. 627.

[2] Et ad infamandum me amplius advocatis frequenter fratris mei ordinis suspectos eidem ordini vehementer propter causas evidenter notas, qui propter notam excessuum turpitudinis propriorum id procurant apud vos, incorrigibiles esse volentes super suis excessibus in iure notoriis per judicum suorum sententias, super quo ipsos fovetis impossibiliter in gravamen et notam mei status et ordinis mei predicti, quorum dictis falsis magis innitimini, quam mee innocentie et puritati. For the full text see Denifle, Akten zum Prozesse Meister Eckeharts. Archiv II, p. 628.

the Roman Curia expressing his willingness and readiness to appear at Avignon on the Monday after Jubilate Sunday, which occurred in that year (1327) on May fourth.

Denifle tells us who these witnesses were—the friars Hermann de Summo and William. The former was not unknown, as his name occurs in two different documents. In the first we read that at one time he appeared as accuser, at another as assistant, and finally as witness.[3] It seems that he vented his rage likewise against Nicholas of Strasburg, whom the Pope had appointed Vicar of Germany. Hermann, who calumniated Eckehart, had in revenge for a well-deserved punishment denounced Nicholas and thus caused him to be excommunicated.[4] This fact explains sufficiently why Hermann passed over to a party hostile to Eckehart; the Archbishop became his protector and as long as the process continued he had nothing to fear from Nicholas, justly incensed against him. It was not otherwise in regard to his accomplice and confrère William.[5] William appears to have surpassed Hermann in his enmity towards Meister Eckehart, whom he accused as a heretic who knowingly and deliberately defended his errors. It is hardly necessary to state that the Archbishop and the commissioners were ill advised by these two refractory monks. The bill of indictment sent to Avignon alludes to this fact, and the Pope, whose attention was drawn to the false witnesses, took up at his curia the investigation against Eckehart, thus putting an end to the process at Cologne. This same bill manifests the great veneration in which Meister Eckehart was held by his Order; it refers to his faith and holiness of

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[3]Aliquando gessit personam actoris, aliquando assessoris, aliquando testis. Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum XXIX, p. 263.

[4]Ipse cum aliis dicitur procurasse, ut etiam famosum est et satis publicum, quod vicarius ille ex hoc et propter hoc, quia quondam fratrem suis gravibus excessibus puniverat, denunciatus fuit excommunicationis sententiam incurrisse. Ibid.

[5]Contra fratrem Gulielmum socium predicti fratris Hermanni.

life, which neither Hermann nor anyone else who knew him could doubt.[6]

On Friday, February 13, 1327, Eckehart preached to the people in the church of the Dominicans. After the sermon he begged Friar Conrad of Halberstadt to read in the presence of a notary a document[7] which he had previously drawn up. As soon as Conrad had read an article, Eckehart explained it word for word in German to the congregation. He then protested his aversion to every species of heresy and immorality and withdrew any error that might be found against faith or morals either in his writings or in his spoken words. "If there be discovered anything erroneous in what I have written, spoken, or preached, openly or secretly, in any place or at any time, directly or indirectly, in a sense not quite correct or to be rejected, I retract it here and now, explicitly and publicly, before all here present, together and individually, and from this moment I wish it to be considered as neither written nor spoken." Then Eckehart took up three articles which had been misinterpreted, showed how he understood them,[8] and again affirmed his perfect readiness to correct and recall whatever should prove to be heterodox.

Much has been written about this recantation of Meister Eckehart. Preger, as well as several others, refuse to believe that Eckehart really recalled any of his

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[6]De cuius tamen fide et vite sanctitate nec ipse (Hermann) debet nec alius, qui vitam suam noverit, dubitare.

[7]For the complete text see Denifle, op. cit. II, p. 630.

[8]Specialiter etiam quia male intellectum me audio, quod ego predicaverim, minimum meum digitum creasse omnia, quia illud non intellexi, nec dixi prout verba sonant, sed dixi de digitis illius parvi pueri Jhesu.

Et quod aliquid sit in anima, si ipsa tota esset talis, ipsa esset increata, intellexi verum esse et intelligo etiam secundum doctores meos collegas, si anima esset intellectus essentialiter.

Nec etiam unquam dixi, quod sciam, nec sensi, quod aliquid sit in anima, quod sit aliquid animae quod sit increatum et increabile, quia tunc anima esset peciata excreato et increato, cuius oppositum scripsi et docui, nisi quis vellet dicere: increatum vel non creatum, id est non per se creatum, sed concreatum. Denifle, op. cit. II, p. 631.

doctrines or even admitted their heresy.[9] Charles Schmidt goes so far as to say: "Each line of Eckehart's writings betrays a conviction so profound, a religious and philosophical enthusiasm so ardent, a logic so inflexible, that an absolute retractation would hardly be comformable to his character"; therefore Schmidt calls this retractation "an illusion on the part of Eckehart."[10] Delacroix, after stating that Eckehart did not expressly reject the twenty-eight incriminated articles, as they had not yet been definitely drawn up, adds that by the full submission he promised in advance to the pontifical decrees, he leads us to believe that he would not have hesitated to retract them earlier. Hence Delacroix admits, as every candid, unbiased mind logically must, that Eckehart's whole character as revealed in his writings, shows a thinker as upright as he is profound and withal a most obedient son of Mother Church, who, without laying down any condition, humbly submits to the decisions of the Holy See.[11] And yet Delacroix cannot refrain from adding: "Truly, humility is admirable, but the exercise of the intellect supposes a little pride; to think, it is necessary to be, that is to say, it is necessary to begin by being conscious of one's own being. One admires the equanimity of character, the profound modesty, the perfect propriety which enabled an Eckehart or a Fénelon to submit absolutely and without any restriction to a judgment on their teaching; but this admiration is not without a little impatience and ill-humor; truth is diverse and each person in the very name of general and absolute truth, has the duty of defending the species of truth which he produces. Reason cannot bow but before reason.[12] Büttner does not hesitate to call the statement that Eckehart

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[9]Preger, op. cit., p. 361.
[10]Schmidt, op. cit., p. 244.
[11]Delacroix, Essai sur le mysticisme spéculatif en Allemagne, p. 229. Paris, 1899.
[12]Ibid., p. 231.

recanted a falsification of history.[13] But did Eckehart not say distinctly and before witnesses, whose names are affixed to the document, that if on impartial examination it was found that he had taught anything contrary to the Catholic faith, he recanted it as completely as though it had never been written or spoken? He surely could not recall each of the twenty-eight articles before they had been condemned! Evidently, three of the articles had been specifically censured by the Inquisitors, and these three, as said above, he interprets in an orthodox sense for his hearers. We must, however, admit that Eckehart never appeared greater, nor more triumphant than when, conscious of his own human limitations, he submitted freely and unconditionally to a higher, to a divinely appointed authority. What then renders this belief in Eckehart's retractation so difficult?

His appeal to the Roman Curia was rejected by the Commission on February 22, 1327, as worthless, "frivola." The process was not concluded at Cologne, but was brought to a final issue two years later at Avignon, when John XXII, in the Bull "In agro dominico,"[14] condemned twenty-eight articles drawn from Eckehart's works. The first fifteen and the last two are pronounced heretical and the eleven others as daring and liable to contain heresy, although by means of many expositions and additions they can be interpreted in a Catholic sense.[15] Then follows the prohibition to defend or approve the condemned articles and the bull concludes by stating that Eckehart before his death again fully retracted any word, spoken or written, that was found to contain heresy or was capable of any heretical interpretation.[16]

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[13]Büttner, Meister Eckeharts Schriften und Predigten, I, p. XXXIV. Leipzig, 1903.

[14]For full text see Denifle, op. cit. II, p. 636.

[15]Male sonare et multum esse temerarios de heresique suspectos, licet cum multis expositionibus et suppletionibus sensum catholicum formare valeant vel habere.

[16]Ch. Schmidt (op. cit., p. 245) states that in the following year

In the meantime Eckehart had quietly passed away in 1327, but not without again fully and humbly submitting to the decisions of the Holy See. Well might his memory be held in benediction by those of his disciples who knew him best. Blessed Henry Suso, in one of his spiritual letters to Elizabeth Staglin, says: "My daughter, it is only a short time since you communicated to me the high and sublime thoughts you collected from the beautiful writings of Meister Eckehart, of holy memory, and you did well to preserve them so reverently. I am astonished that after having tasted this delicious draught, you appear to desire the simple beverage that I can give you."[17] Suso tells us in his "Life" that Eckehart appeared to him in a vision and declared that his soul was plunged in an ineffable brightness and all glorified in God. Suso and Tauler always speak of him in terms of the greatest reverence; they call him "the holy Master," "the blessed Master," "the Saint." At the head of his treatises contemporary copyists wrote: "This is Meister Eckehart, from whom God never concealed anything," or "This is Meister Eckehart, who taught the way of all truth."

(1330) Pope John XXII directed a bull against the Beghards; that the articles it condemned were exactly like those drawn from Eckehart's writings; hence there is no doubt of the latter's connection with the heretics—he was their friend and secret patron. This error was indirectly brought about by Henry of Hervord, who had some knowledge of the bull against Eckehart which he supposed had been directed against the Beghards. (See Liber de rebus memorab., ed. Potthast, p. 247.)

[17] Oeuvres du B. Henri Suso traduites par E. Cartier, p. 542. Paris, 1856.

CHAPTER III

THE WORKS OF MEISTER ECKEHART

1. *The Latin Works*

If the student of Eckehart's works were to use Preger as his sole authority, he would be led to conclude that Eckehart wrote in German only, that he is par excellence the German mystic, the "Father of German Speculation," for Preger makes no mention of his Latin works, no reference to those who, like Nicholas of Cusa and Trithemius, have examined them. Nicholas of Cusa[1] tells us that he saw many commentaries by Eckehart on nearly all the books of Sacred Scripture, many sermons, questiones disputatae, etc.; also a short treatise, a reply to his critics, in which he explains his doctrines, and shows that his readers did not understand him aright. Trithemius cites a good, though incomplete list of Eckehart's works.[2] These Latin writings had fallen into oblivion until Denifle, in August, 1880, discovered some important fragments in a manuscript (Cod. Amplon. Fol. n. 181) belonging to the library of Erfurt. Denifle himself has given a detailed account of the outcome of his researches.[3]

The greater part of these writings belong to Eckehart's *Opus tripartitum.* According to the Prologue, this consisted of three parts. The first, the *Liber* or *opus propositionum,* contained more than one thousand propositions of a theologico-philosophical nature distributed through fourteen different treatises, whose titles are enumerated in the Prologue. The *Liber propositionum* was known to Trithemius and is probably the work he calls *Positionum suarum liber,* hence the title in Pfeiffer, *Liber positionum.* The second part, the *Opus,* or *liber questionum,* was

[1]Nicholas of Cusa, Apologia doctae ignorantiae. Parisiis, 1514 I., fol. 390.

[2]Trithemius De script. ecclesiasticis, cap. 537. Cf. Denifle. op. cit. II, p. 418.

[3]Denifle, op. cit. II, p. 417.

arranged after the fashion of the Summa of St. Thomas Aquinas. The third part, the *Opus expositionum,* contained the sermons in its first subdivision and commentaries on Sacred Scripture in the second. In addition to two introductions the Erfurt manuscript contains only a limited fragment of the third part. The second subdivision includes commentaries on Genesis, Exodus, and Wisdom. Of the first subdivision there is only a fragment of the commentary on Ecclesiasticus. In the part still extant Eckehart makes frequent reference to other portions of the *Opus tripartitum.*

Some months later the learned Dominican discovered in the library of the hospital at Cues, on the Moselle, another manuscript dating from 1444, which Nicholas of Cusa had caused to be transcribed, which is based on a more correct and more complete copy than that of the Erfurt Codex.[4] It contains, moreover, the Exposition on the Gospel of St. John. The Commentary on the Book of Wisdom is followed by the twenty-eight condemned articles. After the first seventeen occurs the remark: "These articles were condemned by the Pope and were recalled by Meister Eckehart at the close of his life; the following articles were censured as suspected of heresy,"[5] then come the remaining eleven. The last part of this manuscript is a collection of Latin sermons for the different Sundays of the ecclesiastical year. They are mostly outlines, a few only are complete. The Cues manuscript proves that the "Glossary on the Gospel of St. John," as given by Pfeiffer[6] is the work of some unknown writer who merely borrowed the opening words, "as soon as God was, He created the world," from Eckehart's "Glossary"; it also proves that the *Pater noster* edited by Bach[7] belongs to some one else, for that of the

[4] Cf. Denifle, op. cit. II, p. 673.

[5] Isti articuli condempnati a papa et revocati in fine vite per magistrum Heckardum. Sequentes articuli relicti sunt tamquam suspecti. Ibid., p. 674.

[6] Pfeiffer, op. cit. II., p. 578.

[7] Bach, Meister Eckhart, der Vater der deutschen Speculation, p. 233. Vienna. 1864.

Cues manuscript is quite short and begins thus: Before reciting the Lord's prayer two things are to be noted; first, on account of our indolence in regard to the things of God we must excite ourselves to pray.[8]

In the days of Suso extracts from these Latin writings were translated into German; they were drawn exclusively from the *Commentary on Wisdom.* Pfeiffer has embodied them in the third part of his work as *Maxims.*[9] Most of them are introduced with "Meister Eckehart says." The manuscripts of Erfurt and Cues prove that the most important of Eckehart's works were composed in Latin; that the German writings represent but a very insignificant part of his literary labors; and finally that he is essentially a scholastic as regards matter and form. Like many of the great Schoolmen who preceded him, he is a scholastic as well as a mystic.

2. *The German Works*

Meister Eckehart was one of the first schoolmen to write in German, a man of lofty and penetrating spirit and of far-reaching influence;[10] yet, strange as it may seem, until a very recent date, his writings remained buried in oblivion. Many causes may be assigned for this fact. In the first place, Eckehart's field of labor was subject to frequent change; he seems to have confined his activity to sermons preached in various places; and lastly it was in the interest of the Order not to appear to favor his doctrine, which had been, in part at least, condemned by the Church. Only in our own time, in the middle of the last century, were they drawn from their obscurity into the open light of day. The honor of discovering them belongs to Franz Pfeiffer, who, after much patience and unremitting labor, published in 1857

[8] Ante dominicam orationem nota duo, primo, quia desides sumus ad divina, ideo primo hortatur, ut rogemus et oremus. Denifle, op. cit., p. 675.

[9] Pfeiffer, op. cit. II, p. 597.

[10] Böhmer, Meister Eckehart. Damaris 1865, p. 64.

a rich collection of Eckehart's German works. He divided this collection into four parts: sermons, treatises, maxims, and the *Liber positionum*. The sermons number one hundred and ten; of these, according to Rieger Nos. LXXVI[2], CV-CX are not authentic. There are eighteen treatises; the sixth known as "Daz ist swester Katrie, meister Eckeharts tohter von Strâsburg" originated most probably among the Beghards or the Brethren of the Free Spirit, who wished to shield themselves behind the name and fame of Eckehart.[11] It is quite certain that the third treatise, "Von der sêle werdikeit und eigenschaft," at least in the form presented by Pfeiffer, is not the work of Eckehart, neither is the seventh treatise, "Die zeichen eines wâhrften grundes," nor the eighth, "Von der geburt des êwigen wortes in der sêle." The last, that is the eighteenth treatise, "Diu Glôse über daz êwangelium S. Johannis," is, as shown above, the work of some unknown writer. Two sermons attributed by Pfeiffer[12] to Kraft von Boyberg and to Franke von Kölne, belong most probably to Eckehart; in fact, a manuscript discovered at Strasburg has the latter's name and not Franke's affixed to it, while a printed publication of extracts from Eckehart's writings dated 1521 contains the greater part of this sermon.

There is still another exposition of the *Pater noster* taken from a paper manuscript of the early fifteenth century which bears the title: This is the *Pater noster* with the Glossary of Meister Eckehart.[13] This exposition differs from that given by Bach,[14] while neither agrees with the Latin version of the Cues manuscript. Besides the Lord's Prayer, Bach published an exposition on the verse *Dominus dixit*—the Lord hath said—and a

[11]This treatise has been published by Birlinger as Meister Eckehart's. Alemannia, p. 15. 1875.

[12]In Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum VIII, pp. 238-251.

[13]Diz ist das pater noster myt der glôzen Meister Eckhart. Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie, p. 89. 1882.

[14]Bach, op. cit., p. 233.

short treatise, "How the loving soul is a heaven."[15] Preger contributes a treatise which he discovered in the library of Nürnberg: "On Contemplating God by Means of the Active Reason."[16] The most important addition to Pfeiffer's collection has been made by Sievers,[17] who found twenty-six sermons of Eckehart. Twenty of these he took from a parchment (Laud. Misc., 479, Bodleiana) dating from the close of the fourteenth century and which originally came from a Carthusian monastery near Mainz. This manuscript contains sixty-four German sermons with authors' names appended; thirty-one belong to Eckehart, eleven of which are given wholly or in part by Pfeiffer. The remaining six sermons are contained in a paper manuscript now in the royal library of Cassel (M.S. Theol., 4°, 94) dated 1470, but originally from the Church of St. Peter at Fritzlar. There are ten anonymous sermons in this manuscript written in Eckehart's style; three of these Pfeiffer published from other sources; Delacroix[18] thinks that the six given by Sievers are part of the treatise "Von der sêle werdikeit und eigenschaft." Finally, Büttner, in his modern translation of Eckehart's sermons, embodies a new treatise "Vom zorne der sêle"[19] taken mostly from a Berlin manuscript (Cod. germ. in quart., 191) and other parts from those of Nürnberg and St. Gall.

Meister Eckehart is best known by his sermons. He was one of the first to preach in the churches of the Dominican nuns, to which the laity had access and whither they flocked in great numbers, drawn as much by the personality of the preacher as by the content of his sermons. Among the religious cities and towns of Germany in those days, Strasburg held a foremost rank; all forms of piety were represented there, particularly

[15] Wie die minig sêl ein himel gotes ist genant. Ibid., p. 240.
[16] Preger, op. cit. I, p. 484.
[17] Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum XV.
[18] Delacroix, op. cit., p. 178.
[19] Büttner, op. cit., p. 178.

among the members of "the devout female sex." There were no fewer than seven convents of Dominican nuns in the city. It was to the priests of their Order that these religious looked for spiritual guidance. Only the most learned masters, the most distinguished theologians, were selected to preach to the nuns.[20] The masters and the lectors naturally gave out in their sermons what they themselves had learnt, or what they were actually teaching in the schools. They did not lay aside their character of scholastics; in fact, this was not at all necessary, as is proved by the ordinances addressed in 1290 by the provincial of Germany, Hermann of Minden, to the superiors of his province, in which he recommends that the word of God be often preached to the sisters "by learned brethren as became the erudition of the nuns." They were urged to present the sisters as pure spouses to Christ, to spur them on to stricter observance of enclosure, to die to themselves and to all things, and to strive after mystical union with God. In regard to this last which became more important in proportion as the preachers found the sisters well disposed, the sermons on the subject are styled mystical and the preachers mystics. Here is found the origin of that form of preaching peculiar to the Dominican mystics, which secured them their title of mystics, whereas their true character is that of scholastics.[21]

Then for the first time the nuns heard in their native tongue scholastic speculations on the nature of God, the blessed Trinity, the divine ideas, the relation of the universe to God, human knowledge considered in itself and in relation to God, the ground of the soul, and the birth of the Son of God in the souls of the just. This is the subject matter which differentiates German mysticism from the mysticism of St. Bernard and the Victorines. In their sermons the mystics laid special stress on mystic

[20]Delacroix, op. cit., p. 143.
[21]Denifle, op. cit. II, p. 646.

union with God, emphasizing the repose and quiet of the faculties rather than action. Perhaps none of them discoursed on such profound and abstruse thoughts as Meister Eckehart. That he often preached in the convents of Strasburg is proved by a poem of a Dominican nun, who recounts the merits of three preachers. These are "the worthy lector," whom she does not name, as he was known to all; the "great Meister Dietrich," who speaks exclusively of the beginning or origin; he aims to teach us the eagle's flight, to plunge our souls into the depths without depth; the third is the "wise Meister Eckehart." He speaks of Nothingness—whoever does not understand it has never experienced the divine illumination. He preaches the doctrine of self-annihilation, of the uncreated life, of the absolute reality of being, and of contemplation which is lost, as it were, in this being.[22]

The very nature of these subjects caused him to be often misunderstood, not only by the common people but also by the more learned who either heard him or read his treatises. On one occasion when someone complained that so few understood his sermons, Eckehart replied: "Whoever wishes to understand my sermons must possess five qualities. He ought to be victorious in all con-

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[22]Der werde lesemeister
der wil ir einer sin,
er wil dy sele reizzen
mit der minnen furbit.
siner minen sticke
dut er ir also heiz
daz sy von recher minnen
nuderniden enweiz.
Scheiden abe.

Der hohe meister *Diderich*
der wil vns machen fro,
er sprachet lvterlichen
al in principio.
des adelares fivke
wil er vns machen kunt,
dy sele wil er versencken
in den grunt ane grunt.
Scheidet abe.

Der wise meister *Hechart*
wil vns von niche san:
der des niden verstat,
der mag ez gode clan.
in den hat nit gelvchet
des godeliche schin.
Scheiden.

Ich kan vch nit geduden
waz man vch hat gesat.
ir solet vch gar vernichen
in der geschaffenheit.
geit in daz ungeschaffen,
verlisent vch selber gar,
aldar hat sich ein kaffen
al in des wesen gar.
Scheiden.

This poem has been published in its entirety by Höfler from a parchment in the library of Thun-Hohenstein.

flicts with self, to strive unceasingly after the highest good, to perform all things that God asks of him, to be a beginner in the spiritual life, to annihilate self, and never yield to anger.''[23] He seems to have realized this difficulty for he often alludes to it. ''There are many who do not understand this, and it does not surprise me, for to grasp this one must be detached from all things.''[24] ''For I tell you by the Eternal Truth: unless you yourselves correspond to the eternal truth of which we are speaking, you cannot understand me.''[25] ''Whoever does not comprehend this sermon, let him not trouble himself about it.''[26]

Eckehart had not a few difficulties to overcome in his sermons. He had to form his own language, so to speak. It was the first time that scholastic questions were not discussed in Latin, the language of the schools; new terms intelligible to all and conveying the scholastic ideas had to be coined. Eckehart really succeeded in constructing a scientific language which was more fully developed in the following centuries. However, his desire to be intelligible led him to adopt an epigrammatic, antithetic style and to overlook the necessity of qualifying phrases. This is one reason why he laid himself open to so many accusations of heresy.[27] The reader is often amazed at the vividness of his expressions. This he evinces by the direct questions and answers he frequently introduces into his sermons. In these he formulates any objection that might arise in the mind of his audience and answers it often with comparisons from every-day life. Thus wishing to give his hearers a clear idea of the expression, ''Lord of Hosts,'' he reminds them of a lord surrounded by a great number of retainers; not an unusual sight in those days of feudalism and

[23] Pfeiffer, 2. (Cod. Monac. germ. 365, Fol. 192b.)
[24] Pfeiffer, 209, 29.
[25] Pfeiffer, 181, 19.
[26] Pfeiffer, 284, 28.
[27] Inge, Christian Mysticism, p. 150. New York. 1899.

chivalry.[28] To illustrate how God's work depends on the actual state of each individual soul, he makes use of the following comparison: "If some loaves of oaten bread, some of barley bread, some of rye bread, and some of wheaten bread are placed in a heated oven, although the heat is the same for all, yet it will produce of the one a very fine loaf of bread, a coarser loaf out of another, and a still coarser one out of a third. Thus does God's action vary according to the degree of preparation He finds in each soul."[29] The following example served to show how near the kingdom of God is to us: "If some clear water is poured into a clean vessel and a person gazes into it, he will find his countenance reflected in the clear, still water. In the same way can those who dwell in peace and concord, perceive God in this interior peace and calm."[30]

Another feature of Eckehart's style is his way of passing from the general to the particular, from the abstract to the concrete, and *vice versa*. The general statement that every power in nature seeks to reproduce itself, he elucidates by the particular example that his father's nature sought to reproduce a father; but being unable to do so, it produced that which resembles it in every respect and thus begot a son.[31] From the abstract question whether the angels who serve men on earth are less happy than those who are in heaven, he passes to the concrete example of a person always fully resigned to God's holy will.[32] What might be called the characteristic of Eckehart's German works is the insistent intrusion of the personal element. One can hardly read a page without meeting such expressions as "but I say," "and I, Meister Eckehart," "I speak thus," "I have frequently said," etc.

[28] Büttner, op. cit., p. 4; Sievers, no. 2 in Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum, XV.
[29] Pfeiffer, 490, 4.
[30] Pfeiffer, 233, 12.
[31] Sievers, op. cit., no. 2.
[32] Pfeiffer, 311, 29.

A comparison of the German with the Latin works reveals the great difference between them. In the latter he is always careful to mention the author and often the work from which he cites; whereas in the former, especially in the sermons, he rarely gives any but a general designation; as, "so says a master," "a pagan master says to another master," etc.; on the few occasions where he does name the author, he fails to give the work. The reason for this difference is that the sermons were addressed to a less learned, albeit a very devout assembly, than were those who either listened to or read the more scholarly Latin treatises. The writers whom Eckehart most frequently quotes are the Pseudo-Dionysius, Boethius, the Victorines, Albertus Magnus, Sts. Augustine, Ambrose, Isidore, Bernard, and Thomas, and Plato and Aristotle. Eckehart was well versed in the philosophy of his time; he was thoroughly familiar with the works of Aristotle and his Arabian commentators and with the treatises of St. Thomas. He is lauded by some as perhaps the greatest Aristotelian of his period; but Denifle has proved that he does not cite the Stagirite from the original, but from St. Thomas, and that his erudition in no wise surpasses that of the average scholastic of the period.

In some of his sermons Eckehart returned to the older form of preaching, the homily, taking the Gospel and explaining it verse by verse, often giving it a mystical interpretation. At other times his text was a short saying from the Gospel or the Epistle or from some part of the liturgy of the Mass.[33] Notwithstanding their defects, his sermons abound in high and prolific thoughts which inflamed not only the receptive minds of his hearers, but indirectly through the seeds which they scattered broadcast produced for later generations an abundant spiritual harvest. Never in the succeeding

[33]See sermons on Luke I:26; John XV:11; Wisdom XVIII:14; Heb. XI:37.

centuries could the Church in Germany again boast of a preacher who was at the same time so bold and profound a thinker and of such an original cast of mind as Meister Eckehart.[34] It was his spirit that paved the way for future mysticism in the Fatherland and the most noted mystics like Tauler and Blessed Henry Suso are in the strictest sense of the word Eckehart's disciples.

If the German works alone are consulted one must necessarily conclude that Eckehart was only a mystic and as such had little in common with the scholastics. Hence to obtain a correct view of Eckehart it is of primary importance that his Latin works be brought into connection with the German writings, as these latter often depend on the former for their complete elucidation. In the Latin treatises Eckehart shows himself a true disciple of St. Thomas and a genuine schoolman. In attempting the following outline of his doctrine, quotations from the Latin and the German works are brought together whenever this is possible, and where one is the complement of the other. On account of the fragmentary state of the Latin writings accessible, it has not been possible to draw on them for the last chapters of his doctrine, these have had to be taken entirely from the German sermons and treatises.

[34] Cruel, Geschichte der deutschen Predigt im Mittelalter, p. 383.

CHAPTER IV

THE NATURE, UNITY, AND TRINITY OF GOD

The fundamental proposition of Eckehart's doctrine may be summed up in the statement: "Esse est Deus"—God is being. Everywhere in his Latin and German works he repeats this proposition, "God is being," or "God and being are the same"—Deus et esse idem. This is also the first proposition he lays down in the Prologue to the *Opus tripartitum.*[1] "God is pure being."[2] "Being is His first name."[3] This proposition is more fully developed in the introduction to the *Opus propositionum.* "Whether we ask what God is or who He is, the answer is always—being."[4] Commenting on the text, "Behold I send my angel" (Luke VII, 27) Eckehart interprets the "I" to signify God's being, that God alone is.[5] Here he teaches with St. Thomas that "He who is" is the name most properly applied to God; for, in the first place, it indicates simple existence, and secondly, as it indicates no mode of being, it names the vast extent of substance.[6] Thus the proposition *esse est Deus* forms the essential element in the argument for the existence of God.

But how are we to understand this being which is God? It is for Eckehart, as for the scholastics, an "esse purum et plenum"[7]—the purity and plenitude of being. "In God there is neither number, nor multitude, nor negation; but pure affirmation, the plenitude of being: 'I am who am.'"[8] "All things are in God and of God; for out of Him and without Him there is nothing."[9] Negation asserts nothing; . . . therefore negation has no

[1] The Erfurt manuscript, col. 3, as given in Archiv II.
[2] Pfeiffer, 527, 12; 263, 7.
[3] Pfeiffer, 263, 10; 108, 28.
[4] Erfurt, col. 6.
[5] Pfeiffer, 162, 37; 163, 2.
[6] St. Thomas, 1 p. qu. XIII. a. 11.
[7] Erfurt, cols. 138, 139.
[8] Erfurt, cols. 128, 52; Pfeiffer, 276, 35.
[9] Pfeiffer, 162, 38; 169, 19.

place in God, for He is who is.''[10] Since God is His own existence, is absolute being, there can be no accidental qualities in God.[11] Hence Eckehart continues, ''Accident has no place in God. In Himself he is a pure being, where there is neither this nor that, for all that is in God, is God.''[12] ''The 'I' indicates a subject without any accident, besides accident of itself passes into substance. The reason is that the same being is in the subject of every accident with the very being of the subject. But in the first place being is substance itself; therefore, every accident in God passes into substance.''[13]

With the scholastics, however, Eckehart excepts only relation and says: ''And thus there remain only two predicaments in the Deity, substance and relation.''[14] ''The 'I' signifies pure substance, but pure without any accident, without anything else; substance without quality and without this or that form. But this pertains to God and to Him alone, who is above accident, above species, above genus; and of Him alone is it said.''[15] Thus we come to know what Eckehart understands by *purum esse.* In creatures composed of matter and form, the nature is not the same as the individual whose existence is caused by some exterior agent; hence in creatures essence and existence must differ;[16] but in God, the first efficient Cause, it is impossible that existence should differ from essence. This truth Eckehart shows clearly in his commentary on the scriptural text, ''I am who am.'' ''The 'am' is predicated of a proposition that says, 'I am'; and *secundum adiacens* because as often as it is expressed, it signifies pure and simple being in the subject, and concerning the subject, and is itself the subject; . . . it is evident that the same essence and being pertain to God

[10]Erfurt, cols. 78, 52.
[11]St. Thomas, 1 p. qu. III. a. 6.
[12]Pfeiffer, 99, 19.
[13]Erfurt, col. 58.
[14]Erfurt, col. 58; Pfeiffer, 608, 10.
[15]Erfurt, col. 52; Archiv II, pp. 437-438.
[16]St. Thomas, 1 p. qu. III. a. 3, 4.

alone, whose essence, as Avicenna says, is His existence. He has not essence apart from existence which denotes being."[17] "As in every creature the being which it has from another is one thing, and the essence which it has not from another is something else; therefore there is one question concerning the existence of being, and another question (what it is) concerning the essence or nature of the thing itself. Wherefore, to him who asks what is man or what is an angel, it is stupid to answer, a human being or an angelic being. But concerning God, whose existence is His very essence (quidditas), it is proper to answer the question who or what is God, with—God is; for the being of God is His essence."[18]

Not only is God alone properly being, but because He is being, Eckehart states in common with the scholastics, that He is necessarily one, true, and good. "In His being there is nothing but the contentment of unity."[19] "Whoever tends toward anything that is not God, cannot enter into the unity of God."[20] "This unity is a negation of negation, because it is attributed to God who alone is the first being and the plenitude of being, of whom nothing can be denied and in whom every being pre-existed and is included."[21]

Of the next attribute, that of truth, Eckehart says: "God is truth, and all that is in time, or all that God ever created, is not the truth."[22] "What creatures really are, that they are in God, and therefore God alone is in the truth; and therefore the 'I' (I shall send my angel) denotes the essence of divine truth."[23] "The intellect will never rest save in the substantial truth which includes all things."[24]

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[17]Erfurt, col. 52.
[18]Erfurt, col. 53.
[19]Preiffer, 533, 30.
[20]Pfeiffer, 525, 30; 524, 30.
[21]Erfurt, col. 6; Pfeiffer, 322, 15-23.
[22]Pfeiffer, 57, 33.
[23]Pfeiffer, 162, 40.
[24]Pfeiffer, 21, 10.

Not only is God one and true, but He is likewise good. In affirmation of God's goodness, Eckehart cites first Proclus and then St. Augustine as follows: "And Proclus says in the twelfth proposition, 'the principle and the first cause of every being is goodness.' To this he adds that Dionysius lays down good as the first name of God; and St. Augustine (On the Trinity VIII, 3) says: 'Regard good itself, if thou canst; so wilt thou see God, not good by a good that is other than Himself, but the good of all good.' "[25] Eckehart frequently refers in his sermons to the goodness of God. "The soul is so attracted to goodness, that God must occasionally conceal Himself. . . . If that good which is God, were immediately and continually revealed to the soul, it could not turn away from it to inform the body."[26] "Nothing is good but God alone."[27] "For no one is good or possesses any goodness but from Him alone."[28] "When our divine Redeemer told the faithful servant to enter into the joy of his Lord and that He would place him over all His goods, He really meant: Go out from all created goodness, and out of all divided goodness, and out of all complex goodness. I shall place thee above all this in the uncreated, undivided, and simple goodness, which I am myself."[29] "Goodness is a garment under which God is concealed. . . . If there were no goodness in God, my will should not desire Him."[30] "Do not love this or that good, rather love goodness for the sake of goodness; for all things are desirable or joyful only in the proportion in which God dwells in them. . . . Love Him for the goodness which He is in Himself."[31]

Since God is not only the plenitude of being but being itself, in whom every being pre-existed and is included,

[25] Erfurt, col. 7.
[26] Pfeiffer, 17, 28.
[27] Pfeiffer, 184, 33.
[28] Pfeiffer, 188, 4.
[29] Pfeiffer, 188, 16.
[30] Pfeiffer, 270, 34.
[31] Pfeiffer, 197, 21.

Eckehart excludes every non-being from God and therefore every imperfection. Hence he naturally passes from the idea of plenitude to that of the infinity of God. "God is infinite truth, and goodness, and infinite being."[32] Since God is infinite perfection He is also immutable. "With God there is neither change nor shadow of alteration. For every change is a shadow of His being."[33] In the treatise on *Detachment* Eckehart has a fine passage on the immutability of God. "When something occurs, a fact which God foresaw from all eternity, then people imagine that God has changed. When He is angry with us or confers on us some benefit, it is we who change, but He remains unchanged; just as the sunlight remains the same although it may injure weak eyes and strengthen healthy ones. God does not look out into time, neither does anything new take place in His sight. . . . No new will ever arose in God; even if creation was not always what it is now, it was from eternity in God and in His intellect."[34] "It is God's attribute to remain unchanged in His simple being,"[35] "whose property is immutability, whereas creatures are subject to measure, and number, and change."[36] "God with whom there is no change is above motion and time."[37]

There is no motion in God because in Him there is no potentiality, only actuality; God is *actus purus*—pure actuality. "The work of God is His being."[38] "Being inasmuch as it is first and immobile is at rest, because immobile being is prior to mobile being. On the other hand, being as it is supreme and consequently perfect, is unmoved and at rest, for motion is an act of imperfection; but in God there is no imperfection. He is the plenitude of being."[39] "Without lapse of time, in an

[32]Erfurt, col. 71.
[33]Erfurt, col. 122.
[34]Pfeiffer, 488, 7.
[35]Pfeiffer, 225, 20.
[36]Erfurt, col. 157; Pfeiffer, 321, 8.
[37]Pfeiffer, 133, 26.
[38]Erfurt, col. 35.
[39]Erfurt, col. 32.

instant, God accomplishes all that He does; whereas in the case of secondary agents, motion and time are involved.'"[40] "With God, whose power is His act, action and effect are simultaneous."[41] The Cues codex emphasizes still more strongly that potentiality and act do not differ in God. "In all things out of God, substance and potentiality, being and act, differ. . . . Every being, except the intellect and outside the intellect, is a creature, is creatable, differs from God, and is not God; for in God actuality and potentiality do not differ, which they invariably do in created being. But being, or the first act, is the first division; in the intellect, in God, there is no division."[42] Therefore, since God is pure actuality and since He is immutable, He is removed from every potentiality, a truth which St. Thomas expresses with as much force as simplicity: "Everything which is in any way changed, is in some way a potentiality. Hence it is evident that it is impossible for God to be in any way changeable."[43]

As a consequence of this principle the divine generation itself must be without motion, which Eckehart states thus: "There is another word which is unspoken and unthought, and which never comes forth, but which remains eternally in Him who utters it. In the Father who utters it, it is an emanation and at the same time it is immanent."[44] It is therefore only in a metaphorical sense "that we attribute matter, form, and work to God on account of the grossness of our senses."[45] To illustrate this transference of motion to God, Eckehart makes use of the same example as St. Thomas, namely, that of the builder. "Looking at a house from the point of view of the builder, it is, as it were, the result of his

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[40]Erfurt, col. 34.
[41]Erfurt, col. 32.
[42]The Cues manuscript, Archiv II, p. 677.
[43]Summa, 1 p. qu. IX, a. 1.
[44]Pfeiffer, 272, 1.
[45]Pfeiffer, 513, 9; cf. St. Thomas, 1 p. qu. IX, a. 1.

own action, for the act proceeds from him as an activity; but from the point of view of the material used, the house is passive; for it is in the nature of these two genera—activity and passivity—that the one is contained in the other and that they both form one thing: simultaneously they come into existence and simultaneously they pass away."[46]

Since God is immutable and since He is above all time and number, He is therefore in an eternal *now*. Hence when speaking of that power in the soul by which God draws it to Himself, Eckehart says: "God is in this power as in an eternal now. If the spirit were always united to God by this power, man would never grow old. Because the now in which God created the first man, and the now in which the last human being will pass away, as well as the now in which I am speaking, are all alike in God and form only *one now*."[47] "If I take a portion of time, it is either yesterday or today. But if I take now it will include all time."[48] This *eternal now* has here the same significance that it has for St. Thomas, who states that the *now* that stands still, is said to make eternity according to our comprehension.[49] "Since God dwells unmoved in this eternal now, the soul that considers time and place and number, is in a bad state and far removed from God."[50] "Past and future as such are not in God nor God in them."[51]

God's infinite perfection and being so far transcend all that finite reason can comprehend, that Eckehart often describes God's being negatively and hence exposes his doctrine to misinterpretation and heresy. "The first and simple being is properly known by negatives."[52] "God is better than one can think, and I add, God is some-

[46]Erfurt, col. 133.
[47]Pfeiffer, 44, 10; 164, 20; 268, 18; also Erfurt, col. 12.
[48]Pfeiffer, 268, 16.
[49]St. Thomas, 1 p. qu. X, a, 2, ad. 1.
[50]Pfeiffer, 266, 11, 32.
[51]Erfurt, col. 94. Sievers, op. cit., p. 413.
[52]Erfurt, cols. 79, 49.

thing I know not what; He is all that it is better to be than not to be. . . . He is above all that we can desire. When I preached in Paris I said, and I could well afford to say it: All the learned men of Paris could not comprehand what God is in the smallest creature, yea, not even in a fly. But I say now, that the whole world cannot grasp it. All that can be thought of God, He is not. That which God is in Himself, no one can know, unless he be lifted up into the light which is God Himself."[53] "In God there is neither good, nor better, nor best. Whoever says that God is good, wrongs Him as much as he does who should call the sun black."[54] This last citation contains almost verbatim the twenty-eighth proposition condemned by John XXII as heretical.[55] But when it is compared with the following quotation it assumes a different meaning. "God is nameless, for no one can say or know anything about Him. In this sense a pagan master said: Whatever we know or say about the First Cause pertains more to ourselves than to the First Cause, for He transcends all words and all knowledge. If I then say God is good, it is not true; I am good, God is not good! I shall proceed further—I am better than God! For only what is good can be better; and since God is not better, He cannot be the best. Far from God are these three determinations, good, better, best; He is above all this. If I continue and add, God is wise, it is not true; I am wiser than He is! And if I still say, God is a being, it is not true; He is a transcendent being and a supra-existing nothingness! . . . Therefore, be silent and prate no more about God."[56]

In accordance with Eckehart's doctrine, God is the most absolutely simple being and this to such an extent that every distinction is excluded from Him; in God "is" and

[53]Pfeiffer, 169, 25.
[54]Pfeiffer, 269, 18.
[55]Quod deus non est bonus neque melior neque optimus; ita male dico, quandocunque voco deum bonum, ac si ego album vocarem nigrum.
[56]Pfeiffer, 318, 31; 268, 37.

"is not" are identical. Nevertheless, Eckehart differentiates between the Godhead and God. By the Godhead he understands the abiding potentiality of being, containing within itself all distinction as yet undeveloped. "When I dwelt in the ground and depth, in the stream and source of the Godhead, nobody asked me whither I was going or what I was doing, for there was no one who could have asked me. Only after I emanated thence did all creatures proclaim God to me. . . . Thus all creatures speak of God; and why do they not speak of the Godhead? All that is in God is one, and of that nothing can be said. Only God acts, the Godhead does not act; there is no operation there. God and Godhead differ as doing and non-doing."[57] Eckehart represents the Godhead as an eternal immutable calm— "He dwells in a stillness which transcends every form,"[58] in which there is no activity. "Therefore, the soul can be perfectly happy only by casting itself into the formless Godhead, where there is neither operation nor image, and by losing and burying itself in this desert,"[59] in which, as it were, God is concealed from and unknown to Himself, whereas in the Trinity He reveals Himself as a living light.[60]

The Latin writings of Eckehart that have come down to us contain very little on the Trinity. In regard to this fundamental mystery his teaching is as follows: "There are two predicates in God, substance and a reflection, which is called relation. Now the masters say, that the Father's essence does not produce the Son in the Godhead, because the Father according to His nature beholds all things in His pure essence, and He sees Himself therein with all His power, without the Son and without the Holy Ghost, He sees only the unity of His essence. But when the Father wishes to have a reflection of Himself in another person, then He brings forth the

[57] Pfeiffer, 181, 4; 281, 20; 234, 21.
[58] Büttner, op. cit., p. 187.
[59] Pfeiffer, 242, 1.
[60] Pfeiffer, 499, 14.

Son in this reflection; since He is so rejoiced at this reflection, and since all joy has been His eternally, therefore, this reflection must be eternal. Hence the Son is as eternal as the Father; and this pleasure which the Father and the Son mutually enjoy is the Holy Spirit; as this love between the Father and the Son has been eternal, therefore the Holy Spirit is as eternal as the Father and the Son. The three persons have but one essence, but are different as regards the persons; for the person of the Father was never the person of the Son nor that of the Holy Ghost. All three are distinct in regard to the persons and are nevertheless one in their essence."[61] "In God there are but two predicates, substance and relation; substance by reason of its being is not diffusive; it exists only for itself and for nothing else and it considers being only in relation to itself. . . . As the saints and doctors express it, essence does not generate in the Divinity. For the doctors ordinarily say that the cause of generation is not essence but essence and relation. But to decide which is really prior in time is a difficult question. Hence relation is necessary, because of its diffusion and fecundity in the Divinity. And this is what Boethius says: the essence contains the unity, but the relation expresses itself in the Trinity. . . . For the Father did not utter the Word or generate the Son forasmuch as He is essence or substance, but inasmuch as He is the beginning. This is generally interpreted that the Word was in the beginning, that is in the Father. But beginning as the first, denotes relation of order and origin. For in *De Causis* it is said, the first being is self-sufficient. *Primum,* not *prius,* because by reason of the relation or order God possesses diffusion or fecundity as much in the Divinity as in creatures."[62]

This same doctrine Eckehart repeats continually in many places of his sermons and treatises; thus he ex-

[61] Pfeiffer, 608, 10.
[62] Erfurt, cols. 58, 59.

pounds the text of St. John, "I saw the Word in God": "God is pure being, pure intellect; He knows Himself in Himself. St. John means that the Son is in the nature of the Father. 'I saw the Word in God;' there he signifies that the intellect which is eternal in God, proceeded from God in a distinction of persons, which is the Son. 'I saw the Word before God;' that is, that the Son is eternally born of the Father and is an image of Him."[63] That there must necessarily be more than one person in God, he explains as follows: "Their eternal origin is the Father, and the idea of all things in Him is the Son, the love for this idea or image is the Holy Ghost. Hence if the Framer of all things had not dwelt eternally in the Father, the Father could not have created. This is said on account of the infinite power of the Father; hence there must be more than one person, because all creatures emanated in the eternal emanation of the Son and not of themselves."[64]

Among the condemned articles there are two that relate to the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity. "God is one in every way and according to every idea, so that it would be impossible to find in Him anything like number, either within or without His intellect. He who sees two or a distinction does not see God, for God is one beyond and above number, nor does He compare in number with anyone. Therefore, there can be no difference between being and being understood."[65] This last proposition taken from the *Exposition on Exodus* forms the twenty-third condemned article,[66] as it does away with the distinction of the three Divine Persons. A similar error is con-

[63]Pfeiffer, 527, 12; 530, 14. Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum, VIII, p. 241.

[64]Pfeiffer, Zeitschrift für deutches Altertum VIII, p. 248; Erfurt, col. 97.

[65]Cues manuscript, Archiv II, p. 683.

[66]Deus est unus omnibus modis et secundum omnem rationem, ita ut in ipso non sit invenire aliquam multitudinem in intellectu vel extra intellectum; qui enim duo videt vel distinctionem videt, deum non videt, deus enim unus est extra numerum et supra numerum, nec ponit in unum cum aliquo. Sequitur: nulla igitur distinctio in ipso deo esse potest aut intelligi.

tained in the twenty-fourth article: "Every distinction is foreign to God and is found neither in His nature nor in His persons; this is proved by the fact that His very nature is one and the same, and each person is one and the same as His nature."[67] Here is an instance of Eckehart's extravagant and unsystematic thinking which led him to deny the plurality of persons in God.

In summing up Eckehart's doctrine on the nature, unity, and Trinity of God we note, that "*esse est Deus*"—God is being—is the fundamental proposition on which he bases his theology, a proposition which no scholastic before his time used so extensively. This Divine Being is with Eckehart, as with the scholastics, an esse purum et plenum—the purity and plenitude of being, in whom there are but two predicaments, substance and relation. God, because He is pure being, is necessarily one, true and good; and because He is the plenitude of being, there can be no imperfection in Him, therefore, no motion. He is, consequently, pure actuality; in Him actuality and potentiality do not differ. If Eckehart is anywhere a scholastic it is in his doctrine of the Blessed Trinity. The Father is unbegotten; the Son is generated by the Father because He proceeds from the Father by way of intelligible action and of similitude, for the concept of the intellect is a likeness or an image of the object conceived; hence the Son is called by Eckehart the Word and the Image. The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son not by way of generation but of procession, as spirit. He is the mutual love of the Father and the Son; hence Eckehart applies the names of love and gift to the Holy Spirit.[68] As regards their essence the three Divine Persons form one unity free from every distinction, whereas their relation expresses itself in the Trinity. No other doctrine appears so frequently in the German

[67]Omnis distinctio est a deo aliena, neque in natura neque in personis; probatur: quia natura ipsa est una et hoc unum, et quelibet persona est una et id ipsum unum, quod natura.

[68]Pfeiffer, 265, 31; 146, 6; 365, 25; 132, 3.

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works. There is hardly a sermon or a treatise in which reference is not made to the Blessed Trinity, either in connection with the nature of the soul or with Eckehart's favorite topic—the divine generation in the soul of the just.

Thus on all essential points Eckehart is a true scholastic, as to both content and formulae. But he is also a mystic, this more particularly in the German writings, where he almost invariably adds several mystical interpretations to the scholastic teaching, whether he speaks of the nature of God, of His unity, of the Trinity, of His goodness, His immutability or any other divine perfection. It is, moreover, in accord with the nature of mystic intuition that transcending the attributes and relations of God, Eckehart should seek to penetrate into His very being, even to differentiate between God and Godhead. When speaking of the goodness of God it was noted how his love of paradoxes led him into error, unconsciously, it is true, as parallel passages prove. At other times it is his unsystematic thinking as well as his somewhat obscure style that are the causes of his heterodoxy. Thus he carries the doctrine of the unity of God to the extreme of denying the plurality and the distinction of the Divine Persons.

CHAPTER V

THE CREATION

1. *The Divine Ideas*

Eckehart's doctrine of the causes or ideas of creatures follows scholastic teaching in general. He admits a twofold being in creatures: "Every creature has one being in its original cause, that is in the word of God, . . . and another being in the things of nature where each has its peculiar form. The first is virtual being, the other formal being which is generally weak and changeable."[1] "All things are nobler in God than they are in themselves,"[2] because the virtual being of anything, namely that which it has in God, is more elevated and excellent than its formal being or the source of its actuality.[3]

What Eckehart understands by the virtual being of creatures, he clearly points out in the following: "The effect always pre-exists in its essential cause; and the simpler, the more uniform, and the more unique a thing is, the higher is its cause."[4] "For all things are intellectually in God as in their First Cause and Creator. Hence they cannot have their formal being unless an efficient cause draws them forth by giving them a real existence."[5] This ideal existence or prototype of things in God is rendered more intelligible by the fact that the mind usually possesses some preconceived image of the object not as it actually is, but as it appears in the intellect. The favorite example of the schoolmen to illustrate this truth is that of the architect or builder, who aims at making the material house resemble as closely as possible the image that exists in his intellect. It is in this sense that Ecke-

[1] Erfurt, col. 20.
[2] Pfeiffer, 530, 8; 321, 14.
[3] Erfurt, col. 22.
[4] Erfurt, col. 27; cf. St. Thomas, 1 p. qu. IV., a 2.
[5] Erfurt, col. 90.

hart continues: "When God created the world . . . He created all things according to the active intellect of His Being; hence there must have been an eternal idea or prototype in the Divine intelligence according to which God created all things."[6] Hence also: "Everything is hidden and latent in its cause;"[7] and, therefore, "things in Him are the causes of things actually existing."[8] "The cause of a thing is prior to and more excellent than the thing itself, because it is the beginning and the cause of it. Hence 'in the beginning was the Word.' The Greek has λόγος, the Latin *ratio* or idea; this cause is always prior to the thing itself, and the thing does not include the cause but the cause includes the thing."[9]

Eckehart repeatedly speaks of the Word as the *ratio rei*—the cause of things. "God uttered a word, that was the knowledge of Himself or the Son. With that eternal knowledge He knew all things and understood how to create them out of nothing, which they are in themselves. But while they were eternally in Him they were not individual existences . . . He was. For God can be God only and nothing else. Therefore, all creatures are a light, because they are known in the light of unity and of eternity. Therefore, too, all creatures emanate as a light to reveal the hidden light."[10] "When God created the world He did not look without for the ideas of creation. This is then the origin, the cause, as it is called, of ideas according to which God created, contemplating nothing from without. . . . Hence the saints commonly explain that in the beginning God created heaven and earth, that is in the Son who is the image and cause of ideas; whoever denies this, denies the Son of God. Thus God in the beginning created all things, that is in the cause and according to the ideal cause."[11] "The bright

[6] Pfeiffer, 325, 23; 326, 11; cf. St. Thomas, 1 p. qu. XV, a. 1.
[7] Erfurt, cols. 68, 16. Pfeiffer, 333, 10.
[8] Erfurt, col. 90; Pfeiffer, 529, 18.
[9] Erfurt, col. 67; cf. St. Thomas, 1 p. qu. VIII, a. 1.
[10] Pfeiffer, Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum, VIII, p. 239.
[11] Erfurt, col. 12.

mirror of eternity is the eternal intellect of the Father. In this the Father forms an image of Himself, the Son, in whom all things are reflected, but not as creatures, for nothing is there but God in God.''[12]

It is evident that Eckehart identifies the Word with the divine ideas and as the Word is eternal, so also are the ideas eternal. This he distinctly teaches in many places. ''All things emanated in the eternal emanation of the Son from the Father.''[13] Here, Denifle says,[14] is the answer to the older scholastics who ask, whether the Word connotes some effect in creatures. Eckehart, in fact, says: ''The Father's utterance produced the Word and creatures.''[15] ''The Father spoke one word, that was the Son. But in that one word He spoke all things.''[16]

The ideas are not, according to Eckehart, the realizations of a divine will, an arbitrary creation of God; they are the eternal thoughts of God and therefore uncreated like God Himself. ''The causes of creatures are not creatures, nor are they creatable as such, for they are *ante rem* and *post rem*, they are the original causes of the things themselves.''[17] Here Eckehart differs essentially from Eriugena in identifying the Word with the divine ideas, and, consequently, considering them as uncreated. Eriugena, on the contrary, does not recognize the second nature, that is the aggregate of ideas in the Divine Word, in so far as they are primordial causes, as the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. He asserts that the Son is begotten from all eternity; from all eternity, too, the primordial causes were made—*natura quae creatur et creat.* Preger states that Eckehart teaches the creation of the ideal world out of nothing, and therefore time begins with the creation of the ideal world.[18] But Ecke-

[12]Pfeiffer, 378, 37; Erfurt, cols. 12, 13.
[13]Pfeiffer Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum VIII, p. 248; Erfurt, cols. 12, 14.
[14]Denifle, op. cit., II, p. 464.
[15]Erfurt, col. 69.
[16]Sievers, Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum XV, p. 414.
[17]Erfurt, col. 90.
[18]Preger, op. cit., pp. 392-395.

hart in reality asserts the contrary doctrine. The ideas are eternal and time begins only with the creation of the exterior world, that is the world of reality.

2. *The Creation of the World*

In the *Prologue* to the *Opus tripartitum*[19] Eckehart gives four different interpretations of the scriptural text "In the beginning God created heaven and earth" (Gen. I. 1) namely: (1) God and God alone created heaven and earth, that is the highest and the lowest, consequently all things. (2) He created in the beginning, that is, in Himself. (3) He certainly created in the past and is nevertheless always in the beginning of creation. (4) Creation and every work of God was in the very beginning of creation at once perfect and complete.

As regards the first interpretation, that God created all things, Eckehart teaches: "Creation is a collection of being; and it is not necessary to add out of nothing, because before being there is only nothing."[20] "God created the world and all things in the world."[21] "In the second place it is said, that He created in the beginning, that is in Himself. . . . Creation gives or confers being. But being is the beginning and the first before which and without which there is nothing."[22] "The First Cause produces every effect of Himself and in Himself. The reason is that apart from the First Cause there is nothing. . . . It is evident that every creature of itself and in itself is created by God and in God."[23] "Creation is something produced from nothing. As a man is made from a non-man and being in general from non-being, and what is opposed in nature from its opposite; so the creation by the first and highest Agent necessarily produces a simple being from a simple non-being."[24]

[19]Erfurt, col. 4.
[20]Erfurt, cols. 4, 14.
[21]Sievers, op. cit., p. 386; Pfeiffer, Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum VIII, p. 239.
[22]Erfurt, cols. 4, 14.
[23]Erfurt, col. 73; Pfeiffer, 528, 33.
[24]Erfurt, col. 91; cf. St. Thomas, 1 p. qu. XLV, a. 1.

For the significance of the *ex nihilo*—out of nothing—Eckehart follows St. Thomas, who states that the *ex* does not signify the material cause but only the order, "by stating the relation between what is now and its previous non-existence."[25] This is Eckehart's meaning when he observes: "But God and He alone produces all things out of nothing and not from something else that was prior thereto."[26] "The nothing we were before coming into existence, was in need of nothing and withstood all created being; the Divine power which alone is above all things, gave motion to the nothing when God created all things out of nothing."[27]

As omnipotent power alone could produce being out of nothing, in the same way omnipotence alone can preserve creatures in their being. "The First Cause, which is God, exerts its influence no less by preserving the effect in being than by bringing it into being; and conversely, the effect, although complete, depends on the First Cause no less for its continuation than for its existence."[28] As Eckehart assigns paternity to God as a characteristic belonging to the Creator of all things, so does he also assign maternity to Him, because from Him all creatures receive their being and are preserved in being; hence whatever falls away from God falls necessarily into nothingness.[29] In this he again follows St. Thomas[30] who teaches that no creature could subsist for a moment if not kept in being by the operation of Divine power, and like him uses the example of a builder, "who is not the cause of the being of the house, but the cause that the house is built."[31] "As soon as a house is constructed the builder leaves it, since he is not the immediate cause of the house, for he takes the materials from nature; but

[25]St. Thomas. 1 p. qu. XLV, a. 1, ad. 3.
[26]Erfurt, col. 144.
[27]Pfeiffer, 509, 29.
[28]Erfurt, cols. 73, 74.
[29]Pfeiffer, 610, 29; Erfurt, col. 132.
[30]St. Thomas, 1 p. qu. CIV, a. 1.
[31]Erfurt, col. 133.

God gives immediately to the creature all that it is, both matter and form, and therefore He must remain in the creature else it would fall away from its being.''[32]

That very part of Eckehart's system where clearness is most needed to avoid error, is unfortunately the most obscure—the immanence of God in creatures. In speaking of the nature of God, Eckehart teaches that in God *esse et essentia*—being and essence—are identical, whereas in creatures they differ: ''In every creature the being is that which it receives from another; the essence which it has not from another is something different.''[33] This *esse* he considers as something abstract; it is not clear whether or not he regards it as identical with the divine *esse.* This uncertainty causes a great divergence of opinion as to whether Eckehart is a pantheist or not. Preger will not admit any pantheism in Eckehart's doctrine concerning the creation.[34] In direct opposition to him is Ch. Schmidt who asserts: ''Meister Eckehart speaks not only of an *ideal* existence of things in the Divine intellect, but also of a real objective being of things in the very *being* of God, or rather of the absolute unity of being: that is to say, he teaches the identity of God and the world. . . . He thus establishes the most absolute pantheism in his double but identical expression: 'God is all and all is God.' ''[35] Several modern students of Eckehart, such as Grabmann,[36] von Hügel,[37] Langenberg,[38] and Lichtenberger[39] agree with the conclusion drawn by Denifle,[40] whose argument is outlined as fol-

[32]Pfeiffer, 611, 1.
[33]Erfurt, cols. 53, 90.
[34]Preger, op. cit., p. 396.
[35]Schmidt, op. cit., p. 266.
[36]Grabmann, Die Lehre des hl. Thomas von der Scintilla Animae. Jahrbuch für Philosophie und speculative Theologie p. 414. Paderborn, 1900.
[37]Von Hügel, The Mystical Element of Religion II, p. 317. London, 1909.
[38]Langenberg, Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte der deutschen Mystik, p. 182. Bonn, 1902.
[39]Lichtenberger, Le Mysticisme allemand. Revue des Cours et Conférences, p. 443. Paris, 1910.
[40]Among those who differ essentially from Denifle are: Bach,

lows: Eckehart does not distinguish clearly between the *esse* of God and the *esse* of creatures. He says: "What is so near to being itself, which is God, as existence? Or what is so intimately related as existence and being, between which there is no medium?"[41] Eckehart does not discriminate between the two ideas which makes it easy to identify in his teaching the *esse* of God and the *esse* of creatures. Frequently he states the orthodox doctrine correctly but adds ideas which are difficult to reconcile with the teaching of the Church; then again he writes in perfect conformity with her doctrine; as: "Being alone gives rest and causes all things that are without to rest in it and in it alone. Therefore, God who alone is being reposes in Himself and causes all things to repose in Him."[42] Eckehart then proceeds to treat of the *esse* in art and in nature and remarks: "But all and every being whether in art or in nature, inasmuch as it is being, that is by reason of its being, is from God and God alone. Therefore, in giving being to creatures God causes them to rest."[43] Here he makes the same statements regarding the *esse* of creatures that he makes concerning the *esse* of God. "God recognizes and knows nothing but being. He is limited by being. God loves nothing save His being. All creatures are being."[44] Could anything be stated more clearly and be more orthodox than the following passage? "God created the whole world; however, creatures did not emanate from the Divine being according to their natural birth as did the eternal Word of the Father, for then the creature would be God, which no

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Meister Eckhart, p. 171. Linsenmann, Der ethische Charakter der Lehre Meister Eckeharts, p. 9. Ullmann, Reformers before the Reformation, p. 29. W. R. Inge, Christian Mysticism, pp. 118, 153. Delacroix, Le Mysticisme spéculatif en Allemagne, p. 276ff. Pahncke, Ein Grundgedanke der deutschen Predigt Meister Eckeharts in Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte, March, 1913.

[41] Erfurt, col. 144.
[42] Erfurt, cols. 32, 150.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Pfeiffer, 262, 40.

right mind can conceive and which the very nature of creatures condemns as something impossible.''[45]

''God loves everything because of its being,''[46] but this being is God; here is the whole of Eckehart's argument. But unfortunately the *esse* which he at first designates as that of God, appears suddenly as that of creatures. This continual mingling of divine and of created being is found in many parts of his works.[47] According to Thomistic teaching creatures have their own existence yet are ever dependent on God for their preservation. With Eckehart, on the contrary, creatures exist through their being which exists in the being of God, and this latter more than the created essence forms a substratum for the *esse* of creatures. ''By whom, through whom, and in whom are all things. *Are* because it signifies being.''[48] Since the being of creatures does not really exist in the creature but in the being of God, therefore created being must necessarily be apparent being. What, then, is created if not universal being? Hence Eckehart could well call created things *nihil*—nothing. Here may be found the source of two condemned articles. The first of these, the seventh, is ''He who prays for perishable things, prays for nothing; he prays badly and for an evil; from which evil we beg to be delivered when we say at the close of the Pater noster, 'and deliver us from evil.' ''[49] The other article is the twentieth: ''All creatures are a pure nothing. I do not say that they are small or something, they are simply nothing.''[50]

With the scholastics Eckehart teaches that a knowledge of the Divine Persons is necessary for a right idea of creatures. Hence after having stated: ''Therefore in the beginning He created heaven and earth, that is in the intel-

[45]Pfeiffer, 325, 23.
[46]Erfurt, col. 165.
[47]Erfurt, cols. 4, 42, 70, 72, 137, 139.
[48]Erfurt, col. 167.
[49]Erfurt, col. 95; the same article is found verbatim in the Cues manuscript, Archiv II, p. 682; pp. 491-516.
[50]Pfeiffer, 136, 23.

lect," Eckehart concludes in regular Thomistic style, "and this is against those who say that God created and produced creatures naturally and through necessity."[51] Therefore, it is God's infinite goodness and love that produced all creatures and preserves them in being. "It is on account of His goodness that God pours Himself out and communicates Himself to all creatures."[52] "His divine goodness forced Him to create all things with which He was eternally pregnant in the image of His intellect, that they might enjoy His goodness together with Him."[53]

When did God create the world? Eckehart gives as stated above (p. 58) four different expositions of "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." The third of these that "God certainly created in the past and is, nevertheless, always in the beginning of creation and begins to create," relates chiefly to the time of creation. He says: "The beginning in which God created heaven and earth is the simple *now* of eternity, that *now* in which God is from eternity and in which is . . . the eternal emanation of the Divine Persons. Therefore Moses said, that in the very beginning God created heaven and earth, that is, the absolute beginning in which God is and in which there is no interval whatever. And since it is sometimes asked, why God did not create the world before, it is answered because He could not; for in Him there was no first—*prius*—before the world was. Besides, how could He create the world before, when He creates it in the same *now* in which He is God? For it must not be imagined falsely that God awaited some future *now* in which to create the world. *At one and the same time in which He was God, in which He begot His co-eternal Son, in all things equal to God, He also created the world.*"[54] Here are found embodied the first and the third condemned

[51] Erfurt, col. 12; St. Thomas, 1 p. qu., XXXII, a. 1, ad. 3.
[52] Pfeiffer, 124, 33; 269, 21; 30, 36.
[53] Erfurt, col. 12.
[54] Erfurt, col. 12; Pfeiffer, 579, 7; 266, 27.

propositions. Both of these as well as the second, which is contained verbatim in the *Exposition on St. John,* treat of the eternity of the world. "God was not able to create the world before; because before the world and time there was no before . . . the world always was, for there was never a time in which there was no world. *It can be admitted that the world was from eternity;* and again, that God was not able to create it before, for He created the world in the first now of eternity, in which He is and is God."[55]

Denifle maintains[56] that Eckehart tries to demonstrate to what extent God created the world in the beginning, by giving various interpretations of "in the beginning God created heaven and earth." "In the beginning" signifies "in the Word" or "in the cause of the idea."[57] "that is, He created all things according to the ideal cause."[58] God did not create the ideal world; on the contrary, He created the world of reality, that is the exterior world, according to the ideal cause. A second interpretation is "in the intellect,"[59] or by the intellect, because God created the world rationally and voluntarily and not through necessity. Finally the third interpretation is the "now of eternity"[60] in which God created the world exterior to Himself. Hence Eckehart is speaking here of the creation of the world only in so far as there is question of this in Genesis. According to him the Son is the ideal cause of the world, therefore the creation of the world necessarily presupposes the generation of the Son.

In this one act of God, considered as an act of God only, the two moments, that of uttering the word and that of creating the world, can be differentiated in God alone;

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[55]Archiv II, p. 680.
[56]Ibid., p. 475.
[57]Erfurt, col. 11.
[58]Erfurt, col. 12.
[59]Ibid.
[60]Ibid.

in fact, He performs both the one and the other in the "eternal now." "God spoke but once. He uttered the Son in generation, because the Son is the Word, but He also uttered creation in creating. He spoke and they were made. He commanded and they were created (Ps. 148, 4). Hence this is what the Psalm signifies: God spoke but once, I heard these two—two, I say, heaven and earth. Or rather these two, the emanation of the Persons and the creation of the world."[61] "The eternal emanation is the source of all things as regards their eternity, but in time they are created out of nothing. This is the reason why they are creatures; but in the eternal emanation in which they emanated, they are not themselves, they are God in God."[62] The eternity of God knows neither first nor last, it is an everlasting present in which the life and works of God take place, for God Himself is this *now*. Hence it follows that God, if the *act only* and not the effect be considered, could not have created the world sooner than He really did, for the simple *now* of eternity knows no past and no future, no before and no after, which exist only with the world; God's act is the eternal now.

It is, however, not sure, as some affirm, that Eckehart intends the conclusion of the eternity of the world to be drawn from his words. Denifle asks[63] why we should give to Eckehart's third interpretation of "in the beginning" a signification different from that given to the other two? In these two Eckehart shows how "to create in the beginning" is to be understood on the part of God, and there seems to be no reason why he should have a different point of view in the third. Why consider in this place the effect, when in the other two the act alone is

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[61]Ibid. Pfeiffer, 207, 30. Here the necessary qualifying phrase is added: "But the prophet says: 'I heard two,' that is, I understand God and the creature. When God uttered it, it was God, but here it is a creature."

[62]Pfeiffer, Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum VIII, p. 248.

[63]Denifle, op. cit., II, p. 479.

considered? In the present instance Eckehart formulates his doctrine in such a manner that he seems to teach the eternity of the world. As soon as it is stated that "God created the world from all eternity," or "As soon as God was, He created the world," one is forced to conclude that the world is eternal. This is the effect of our mode of thinking, for we cannot conceive of an act apart from its effect, and we naturally form the same ideas of divine acts, particularly when the creative act is brought into connection with another eternal act of God, as is done in the present case.

To summarize Eckehart's teaching on the creation we note: (1) He admits in every creature a virtual and a formal being. The virtual being it has in God, its essential and First Cause; the formal being is that which it possesses in nature according to its peculiar form. (2) He identifies the Word with the divine ideas. (3) The ideas are the eternal uncreated thought of God; hence the eternity of the world of ideas. (4) God created all things, that is, he brought them from non-being into being. (5) God as the First Cause created all things in Himself, because out of Him there is nothing; hence the *ex nihilo* of creation signifies the order and not the material cause of creation. (6) All creatures depend on God, their First Cause, for their preservation; hence the attributes of paternity and maternity ascribed to God. (7) Eckehart does not discriminate sufficiently between the *esse* of God and that of creatures, but often mingles them and thus seems to imply that they are identical. The created *esse,* according to him, subsists in the divine *esse* which acts as a substratum for the created or universal *esse.* (8) As a result of this, created being can be only apparent being; hence all creatures are a pure nothing. (9) With the scholastics he teaches that God did not create the world through necessity, but voluntarily, because of His infinite goodness. (10) Finally, Eckehart apparently asserts the eternity of the world, as some of his propositions go to prove.

CHAPTER VI

SIN AND THE REDEMPTION

Eckehart attributes to evil the character of privation, as it is a falling away from being, and therefore concludes that evil can have no cause; consequently, it is impossible that God who is being itself, should be the cause of that which possesses no being.[1] In stating that evil has no cause, Eckehart refers to its formal as well as to its final cause. As a privation of form evil has no formal cause, nor has it a final cause since it is a negation of order; nevertheless, evil may have an accidental cause. Thus evil, which consists in a defect of action, is always caused by some defect of an agent. In God there is no defect, there is nothing but infinite perfection, therefore, He cannot be considered the cause of evil. It is in this sense that Eckehart teaches: "As the saints and the philosophers state, evil is nothing but a privation and a falling away from being; a defect, a want of being. Hence the greatness of an evil depends on the amount of good that is wanting; and the evil, whether it is punishment, or guilt, or some other thing, is greater when it is deficient in a good that is superior as to quality, or quantity, or being. For generally that is worse in which a more noble being or a greater variety of being is wanting. In the second place it is evident, that evil has no cause; for a cause presupposes an effect as every effect has a cause. But evil is not an effect but a defect, a negation, which the word 'defect' itself indicates. Therefore, to seek the cause of evil is to seek the cause of that which has no cause, since it is no effect; in fact, not to be an effect and not to have a cause, this is what constitutes the evil. Whoever, therefore, seeks the cause of evil, seeks the cause of non-being. . . . On the other hand, it is especially impossible that God should be the cause of

[1] Cf. St. Thomas, 1 p. qu. XLVIII, a. 1, 3.

evil and death or any other privation, since He alone is the proper and immediate cause of being itself; whereas evil has no being, it is falling away from being. Moreover, since being is an effect peculiar to God who is its cause, He flows into it and communicates being to it; hence being that is evil is impossible. But to say that some good or being is perverted, is the same as to assert that being is not being, or evil is not evil."[2] "It is evident then that since evil is a non-being, it cannot be from God nor can God be in it, for it has no being. Hence those only are evil in whom God does not dwell, for they neither are nor are they created."[3]

Commenting on the next, "They that work by me shall not sin,"[4] Eckehart adds: "Note in the first place a service 'they that work by me,' and then the reward 'shall not sin.' But why is the reward stated negatively 'shall not sin,' for a negative reward is nothing? Service generally implies activity, and reward passivity, that is, receiving something, but punishment consists in privation and pain. Service lies in action and therefore proceeds from the will, which renders us masters of our actions; the reward is in the emotions and in the intellect, for to understand anything is to suffer or receive it from without; lastly, the punishment is in privation and therefore in affliction. Every privation is a falling away from being, consequently from some good, or pleasure, or delight."[5]

In the German works Eckehart seldom mentions evil as such, except very indirectly and then only in connection with some other subject; but evil that is moral, or sin, he does mention, as one would expect in works that have primarily an ethical purpose. With all Catholic theologians Eckehart considers moral evil, or sin, as the only *real* evil in the world. Hence he can truly say: "I

[2]Erfurt, cols. 87, 88; Pfeiffer, 327, 15; 613, 6.
[3]Erfurt, cols. 94, 96.
[4]Ecclus. XXIV, 30.
[5]Erfurt, col. 79.

am certain that nothing can injure me save sin alone,'"[6] for it is the greatest obstacle to God's work in the soul. "Therefore sin must be removed before the soul can be justified and God can dwell in her."[7] Although fully conscious of the enormous guilt of sin, Eckehart refrains from enlarging upon its hatred and malice, and turns instead to its effects. Sin, according to its nature, is a turning away from the ultimate purpose of life, from virtue and everlasting happiness; hence sin is disorder, infirmity and death. Therefore he teaches: "Mortal sin is an infirmity of our nature. Human nature is an image of the Blessed Trinity, a likeness and mirror of the Divinity and of eternity. Mortal sin ruins all this. It is the death of the soul, for it deprives the soul of God, its life. Mortal sin is an unrest of the heart, since it removes the soul from its proper place of repose which is in God, as St. Augustine says: 'Thou hast made us for Thyself; therefore we cannot rest save in Thee.' Mortal sin is a weakening of the faculties, because through our own power we can neither rise from sin nor keep from falling into it. Mortal sin deceives the senses as to its transitory delight as well as to its eternal punishment. Mortal sin is the death of all grace . . . and virtue . . . and good works; for how can a dead person perform living works? Mortal sin is the ban of christendom . . . and finally, it is an everlasting, infernal prison.'"[8]

In his interpretation of "They that work by me shall not sin,'"[9] Eckehart shows what it is that renders one action good and praiseworthy and another sinful. "The first explanation of *by me* is *according to me.* In every art that which is done according to the art is right and good, but what is against the art is wrong and worthy of punishment. The same is true in nature and in morality where all acts are done for a definite end,

[6] Sievers, op. cit., p. 421.
[7] Ibid., p. 383.
[8] Pfeiffer, p. 217, 3-40.
[9] Ecclus. XXIV, 30.

and which by that very fact are considered good. On the contrary, whatever is opposed to nature, to art, to morality or is inconsistent with their laws is sinful; and this alone constitutes the sin. As is said in Jureperitus:[10] 'He who sins does not sin with the authority of the law.' The meaning is, whoever performs an act because the law ordains it, does not sin; but he sins who acts against the law. . . . All that is done according to God is good, but what is done away from Him is sinful, and in this alone does sin consist. And that is the meaning of these words: 'They that work by me,' that is according to me, 'shall not sin.'[11] In another place Eckehart asks what sin is and answers: "Sin is the turning aside from happiness and from virtue."[12] Sin is so great an evil that "rather than knowingly commit sin, either mortal or venial, we must be ready to endure all kinds of suffering that could befall us. Were it possible to redeem a countless number of lost souls by the commission of one venial sin, we may not redeem them on that condition."[13]

Eckehart has a rather striking doctrine on good works performed in the state of mortal sin. The Church teaches that good works done in the state of grace merit an eternal reward from God, but this is lost by mortal sin, and is of no avail to the sinner if he dies unforgiven. So long as he remains in sin he is incapable of meriting, and his works, good in themselves, are worthless. But as soon as his sin is remitted, he regains not only sanctifying grace but also all the merit he had before falling into mortal sin. While fully agreeing with part of this proposition, Eckehart positively denies that works performed in the state of grievous sin are not deserving of merit. He affirms that neither good works done in the state of

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[10]Eckehart understands by Jureperitus the Decree of Gratian especially c. 40, C. XXIII, qu. 4: Qui peccat, non peccat legis auctoritate, sed contra legis auctoritatem.

[11]Erfurt, cols. 80, 82.

[12]Pfeiffer, 172, 29.

[13]Büttner, op. cit., p. 29.

mortal sin, nor the time in which they are accomplished is lost, always provided, however, that man will return to the state of grace. "The works a person performs in the state of mortal sin are not done by means of mortal sin, for these works are good and mortal sin is bad. They proceed instead from the basis of the soul, which of its own nature is good; but as the soul is not in the state of grace, these works do not merit heaven at the time they are performed. Moreover, they do not injure the soul, for their fruit remains in the soul, spiritualized and made one with it. Therefore, it is as impossible to destroy the fruit of the work as it is to destroy the spirit itself. Furthermore, through the execution of these ideas which are good, the spirit frees itself as effectually as if it were in the state of grace and makes the same preparation for union with God. In proportion as the spirit is void of images by the execution of its ideas (ledigende ist und ûz würkende) it will approach to God, and hence in the same proportion neither work nor time is lost. . . . If it were necessary to perform the same good works after the return of grace, there would be need of the time which was employed while the person was in the state of mortal sin, but now this time is at his disposal for other good works that will unite him more closely to God. Hence the fruit of those works remains in the spirit; and although the work and the time are not eternal, nevertheless the spirit from which they proceeded lives, and the fruit of the work, but without the work and the time, is full of grace."[14]

Among the condemned articles there are five that relate to Eckehart's teaching on sin. In the interpretation of the text "That the works of God may be made manifest in him,"[15] after having stated that the end of all God's works is to manifest the glory of God, Eckehart continues: "In every evil work, I say evil inasmuch as it

[14]Pfeiffer, 73, 26.
[15]John, IX, 3.

is wrong, the glory of God is manifested, reflected, and equally evident,[16] according to what was said above, 'And the light shineth in the darkness."[17] . . . He who blasphemes anyone, praises God with the very sin of blasphemy; and the more he blasphemes, the more he praises God.[18] Indeed he praises God by blaspheming God.'"[19] This last quotation contains the fourth, fifth, and sixth condemned articles. The fourteenth is found in the German treatise known as "The Book of Divine Consolations." Eckehart is insisting on complete submission of the human will to the divine will, and, as he frequently does in his ardent, impulsive manner, permits himself certain exaggerated expressions without any thought of their far-reaching import. "And, therefore, if God should will for any reason whatever, that I commit sin, I would not wish that I had not committed it; for thus God's will is accomplished on earth, that is in sin, as it is in heaven, that is in good deeds."[20] The fifteenth condemned article embodies the same idea. "If a person had committed a thousand sins, provided he is rightly disposed, he should not wish he had not committed them."[21]

Eckehart's passage on hell, the eternal punishment for sin, forms a fitting conclusion to his doctrine on sin and evil. "There is question as to what burns in hell. The doctors agree in answering—self-will! But I assert, it is *nothing* that burns in hell. Suppose that some one took

[16]The fourth condemned proposition. Item in omni opere, etiam malo, malo inquam tam pene, quam culpe, manifestatur et relucet equaliter gloria dei.

[17]John I 5.

[18]The fifth condemned proposition. Item vituperans quempiam vituperio ipso peccato vituperii laudat deum, et quo plus vituperat et gravius peccat, amplius deum laudat.

[19]Archiv II, p. 682; the sixth condemned proposition. Item deum quis blasphemando deum laudat.

[20]Pfeiffer, 426, 19. Bonus homo debet sic conformare voluntatem suam voluntati divine, quod ipse velit quicquid deus vult: qua deus vult aliquo modo me peccasse, nollem ego, quod ego peccata non commisissem, et hec est vera penitentia.

[21]Si homo commisisset mille peccata mortalia, si talis homo esset recte dispositus, non deberet velle se ea non commisisse.

a live coal and laid it on my hand; if I then said that the coal burns my hand, I should be greatly mistaken. If I were to say what really burns me, I should have to reply that *nothing* does it; because the coal possesses something which my hand does not, and it is this *nothing* which burns me. If my hand had all that the coal is and does, it would completely possess the nature of fire. Then all the fire that ever burned, if it were poured out on my hand, could not hurt me. In the same way, I assert, that because God and all the saints that behold Him in everlasting bliss, possess something which those souls that are separated from God do not possess, it is this very *nothing* that tortures the souls in hell more than self-will or fire. Thou art imperfect in the same proportion as this *nothing* adheres to thee."[22]

Adam on account of sin fell from the state of original justice and consequently from God and His friendship and brought disorder into creation. "When Adam turned away from God, all his faculties degenerated. Then, too, it was that creatures were differentiated because discord entered among them, one wanting this and another that. Thus all powers were weakened in creatures even to the lowest."[23] Christ alone could restore Adam to the unity from which he had fallen. Hence Eckehart interprets the words, "I go to Him who sent me" thus: "I go to deliver you from all the fetters of creatures into which the sin of Adam has cast you."[24] But Christ accomplished this more fully when He drew all things to Himself. One of Eckehart's most beautiful passages treats of the manner in which Christ, Our Lord, atoned for the sin of Adam.

"Before Our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, the heavenly Father had drawn men with all His power for the space of five thousand and two hundred years, and

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[22]Pfeiffer, 65, 20.
[23]Pfeiffer, 497, 2.
[24]Pfeiffer, 244, 13.

yet He had not drawn anyone into the kingdom of heaven. When the Son saw how hard the Father had labored and had accomplished nothing, then He spoke to the Father saying: 'I will draw them with the cords of Adam'; as though He said: 'I see well, O Father, that all Thy power can effect nothing, therefore my wisdom will draw them with the cords of Adam. This is why the Son descended from heaven into the womb of Our Lady and there assumed all our corporal infirmities, but without the sin and without the folly into which Adam had cast us. He made a cord of all His words and acts, and of all His blood and members, and then drew with all His Heart until finally a bloody sweat poured forth from His sacred Body. After He had drawn thirty-three years and had accomplished nothing, He saw, nevertheless, that all creatures began to be moved and were now ready to follow Him. Therefore, He said: 'When I shall be lifted up, I shall draw all things to myself;' and therefore was He extended on the cross, casting aside His comeliness and all that could prevent Him from drawing us. . . .

"The first thing that naturally draws others is equality. . . . Through His divinity and His equality He drew the heavenly Father. . . . Then to draw Him still closer and to cause Him to forget His anger, the Son spoke: 'Dearest Father, since Thou wouldst never forgive sin, not even in consideration of all the sacrifices offered Thee in the Old Law, therefore I pray Thee, O my Father, I, the only begotten Son of Thy Heart, equal to Thee in all things according to the divinity and in whom Thou hast hidden every treasure of divine love, I have come to this cross as a living holocaust, that Thou cast on me, Thy beloved Son, the eyes of Thy paternal mercy, and beholding the blood which flows from my wounds, do Thou extinguish the fiery sword in the hands of the cherub who guards the entrance to paradise, so that from henceforth

all may freely enter therein who, through me, repent of their sins, confess them, and do penance . . .

"The second way in which He drew all things to Himself was by emptying Himself. All His precious Blood streamed forth, thus drawing to Himself the superabundance of grace and mercy hidden in the Father's Heart, a superabundance that more than sufficed for the whole world. . . . Thirdly, Our Lord Jesus Christ was inflamed and consumed on the cross; for His Sacred Heart burned like a fiery furnace from which flames issued forth on all sides. That the whole world might be redeemed He was consumed on the cross in the fire of His love. It was by the fire of this love that He drew the world to Him; His love for mankind was so great that no one could conceal himself from those flames. . . . For nothing that Our Blessed Lord ever did was accomplished with so great a love as the martyrdom He endured on the cross. There He delivered Himself for us, to wash away our sins in His precious Blood and to offer Himself up as a sacrifice to the living God. Therefore, it was principally by the love which He manifested for us on the cross that He drew us to Himself, that all who compassionate His bitter sufferings and death may be happy with Him in the eternal bliss of heaven."[25]

Our Lord and Savior came on earth to serve as our model in all things; He is the way, the truth, and the life. "Christ alone is our way and the aim that we must follow."[26] "His humanity is the way for our humanity. To understand this fully, let us study this complete exemplar of perfection as well as each of His features separately. If we deviate from even a single trait of our model, we shall deform ourselves. We ought so to live, says St. Paul, that God can behold in us the reflection of all His acts; that is, we ought to strive to imitate the life He taught us by His own example."[27]

[25] Pfeiffer, 218, 26-220, 15.
[26] Pfeiffer, 295, 7.
[27] Pfeiffer, Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum, VIII, no. 8.

CHAPTER VII

VIRTUE AND GOOD WORKS

The virtue on which Meister Eckehart lays most stress and which he considers fundamental, is humility. Humility is the real test of sanctity; for without humility there can be no holiness, no true virtue. "Now some imagine themselves very holy and very perfect because they refrain from great deeds, and all the while they desire and want many things and demand great consideration for themselves. These people imagine they really long for devotion and yet they cannot bear the least word!"[1] "If we want to know in whom God dwells, we can easily discover it by two things, namely, true humility and charity."[2]

But how can true humility be known? "This is true humility—that man who has been created out of nothing, should because of this very nothingness not presume either to do or to omit anything of himself, but in all things implore the light of grace. In this knowledge of what we are to do and what to leave undone, consists true humility of nature. Humility of spirit leads us to attribute to ourselves as little of all the benefits God has conferred on us, as we did before we had any being."[3] Humility renders man truly great;[4] for God is, as it were, constrained to pour out His graces on the humble. "God can do all things, but He cannot refuse anything to the man who is humble and of great desires. If, therefore, I do not constrain God to do all that I wish, it is because I am wanting either in humility or in desires."[5] Some other advantages that spring from humility are that God strengthens the humble man in all virtues, but

[1] Pfeiffer, 148, 27.
[2] Sievers, op. cit., p. 395.
[3] Pfeiffer, 295, 21.
[4] Pfeiffer, 276, 18.
[5] Pfeiffer, 168, 27.

especially in His holy love;[6] that the humble soul is borne up by divine grace until it reposes in the pure being of God;[7] hence humility paves the way for one of God's greatest gifts—the intimate union of the soul with God.

Eckehart is no less insistent on charity, the life-giving principle of all virtues, than he is on humility. "But humility must be joined to charity, for without charity humility would be dead; it is charity that causes all virtues to be virtues."[8] If humility is the foundation, charity is the crown and mistress of all virtues. "Charity is . . . the mother of all virtue, and all perfection, and all beatitude."[9] At the beginning of conversion fear is necessary, fear as regards sin; but "because fear contracts the heart, charity expels it; the more charity increases, the more fear diminishes."[10] "To serve God through fear is well, but to serve Him through love is better."[11] "True charity does not seek itself, but it loves God for His goodness and for all that He is in Himself."[12] "Love God as readily in poverty as in riches, in sickness as in health; let Him be as dear to thee in trials and suffering, as though thou wert without any suffering."[13]

It is a well-known axiom of the spiritual life that the body is more speedily and more certainly brought into subjection to the spirit through love than through works of penance. Eckehart illustrates this truth as follows: "Love is like the angler's hook: as soon as the fish has bitten, it succumbs to the angler; no matter how the fish may turn and writhe, the angler has it safe."[14] "Where love knows no limits, there God can act according to the measure of His love. And were a man to live a

[6]Pfeiffer, 226, 3.
[7]Pfeiffer, 155, 21.
[8]Pfeiffer, 606, 31.
[9]Pfeiffer, 259, 26.
[10]Pfeiffer, 245, 27.
[11]Pfeiffer, 221, 34.
[12]Pfeiffer, 259, 23.
[13]Pfeiffer, 209, 10.
[14]Pfeiffer, 29, 32.

thousand years, he could constantly increase in charity.''[15] ''So long as thou canst do anything against God or His holy law, thou hast no love of God, even though the whole world should believe thou hast it. It is joy to the man who lovingly abides in God's will, to do all that is pleasing to Him and to avoid all that is displeasing.''[16] This divine love not only subjects the body to the spirit, but as it increases in the soul it generates within it such a longing for the possession of God that the soul can no longer find any pleasure in creatures unless they refer to the Beloved, and the lover himself is gradually transformed, as far as this is possible, into the Beloved. Hence ''the soul that burns with an ardent desire for the love of God and that diligently seeks Him experiences in all things out of God nothing but bitterness and disappointment. Since, therefore, the soul can find no rest in creatures, it becomes wearisome to itself just as soon as it finds itself resting in a creature away from God. Its ardent longing for God compels it to follow after Him, as fire follows its own nature until it has consumed and transformed into itself the object upon which it has seized. Hence St. Augustine says: ''Lord, if Thou remove from us, give us another in Thy place for our souls cannot live without Thee. Whither Thou goest, thither will they follow after Thee, for without Thee they cannot exist. This is perfect love which causes the soul to love unto the end.''[17]

Eckehart considers the love of God perfect if it reigns alone to the exclusion of every other love, yet not because it is superior in itself to every other form of love. In this sense he interprets the text, ''Simon, lovest thou me more than these?''[18] as follows: ''When it is said, lovest thou me more than these, it means, lovest thou me more and better than those belonging to thee?

[15]Büttner, op. cit., p. 28.
[16]Pfeiffer, 232, 29.
[17]Pfeiffer, 335, 22.
[18]John XXI, 15.

But this is not yet perfect love; for first and second, more and less, indicate order and degree, but in unity (in uno) there is no such degree or order. Therefore, although he may love God more and better than those nearest and dearest to him, yet he does not love Him perfectly, for he neither loves God in them nor them in God.''[19] This is the twenty-fifth article mentioned in the bull of condemnation, one of those propositions censured as daring and suspected of heresy.[20]

The love of God must go hand in hand with love of the neighbor, as St. John says: ''If a man say, I love God and hateth his neighbor, he is a liar . . . this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother.''[21] The same thought is found scattered up and down the pages of Eckehart's sermons and treatises. ''Love God above all things and thy neighbor as thyself, for this is a divine precept. But I say it is not only a precept, but a command that God Himself gave.''[22] ''If thou love one person more than another, except it be for his virtue, then thou seekest thyself and God is not thy God.''[23] It is for this very reason charity demands that we forgive him who has offended us. ''Why so? That we fulfill God's will. We ought not to delay this duty until our brother begs us to forgive him, we ought rather say: Friend, forgive me that I have offended thee. And so eager should we be to advance in virtue, that the greater the pain, the more earnest we should be.''[24] ''Does this seem too difficult?'' he asks in another place and then replies: ''Not to him who truly loves God. . . . Such a man is always happy, always

[19]Cues manuscript, Archiv II, p. 683.

[20]Cum dicitur: Simon diligis me plus hiis? sensus est, id est, plusquam istos, et bene quidem, sed non perfecte. In primo enim et secundo et plus et minus et gradus est et ordo, in uno autem nec gradus est nec ordo. Qui igitur diligit deum plus quam proximum, bene quidem, sed nondum perfecte.

[21]1 John IV, 20, 21.

[22]Pfeiffer, 208, 22.

[23]Pfeiffer, 278, 20.

[24]Pfeiffer, 62, 13.

respected, and always reaping benefits; he is really here below dwelling in the kingdom of heaven.''[25]

Next to humility and charity Eckehart lays most stress on conformity to God's holy will and detachment; however, he states in general that one virtue should not be esteemed higher than another,[26] for ''the faithful and loving soul, like the bee that extracts sweet nectar from all sorts of flowers to convert into honey, gathers from each flower of virtue something wherewith to improve and benefit itself.''[27]

Conformably to the doctrine of St. James that ''Faith without good works is dead,''[28] Eckehart frequently emphasizes the value and necessity of good works, both interior and exterior. He teaches that these latter have been ordained and regulated ''to turn the outer man to God, to direct him to a spiritual life and to good works; to restrain man and thus prevent him from neglecting himself or being led astray; to keep the soul ever in readiness for God's action. . . . The aim of all such virtuous acts as praying, spiritual reading, singing hymns, watching, fasting, and works of penance is to attract man, to turn him away and keep him from evil and strange deeds. Therefore, when we no longer perceive the influence of the Holy Spirit acting within us, when we are, as it were, abandoned by God, then it is very necessary that we exercise ourselves in devout works, especially in such as we know by experience to be most effectual and helpful.''[29]

The end or intention of an act is of such importance that it renders acts, indifferent in themselves, either good or bad; consequently all good works are meritorious and pleasing in the sight of God in proportion to the purity of the intention that prompts them. ''The merit of our

[25]Pfeiffer, 136, 7.
[26]Pfeiffer, 190, 22.
[27]Pfeiffer, 414, 11.
[28]Jas. 11, 26.
[29]Pfeiffer, 22, 27.

acts does not depend on their number, greatness or length, but on the intention alone; that is, on the love or charity of the person who accomplishes the work.''[30] ''When a man performs a good deed with the intention directed to something else than God, he renders the honor of the good work to that something and not to God, whom he despoils of the honor. Hence such works are useless and without merit.''[31]

Although good works are necessary, they cannot, however, be substituted for amendment of life—such a procedure would be mere folly. ''I have often said that those who observe long fasts and frequent vigils and perform great works, but who do not correct their faults and reform their lives, in which alone true progress consists, deceive themselves and are the sport of the evil spirit.''[32] ''Let no one measure his advancement in sanctity by prolonged fasts and numerous exterior works. The true sign of progress is the increase of love for heavenly things and a growing distaste for the things of time. If a person, who possesses a hundred marks,[33] should for the love of God give them to found a monastery, he would certainly do a very good work. Nevertheless, I say, it would be far better if a person contemned and annihilated himself as much for the love of God.''[34]

The Brethren of the Free Spirit claimed, as did also the Beghards, that when the ''perfect stage'' is reached good works are useless. In opposition to these heretics Eckehart strongly insists on the doctrine that there can never be a time when good works are not necessary. ''No one can ever arrive at a point in this life when he need not perform exterior good works. Above all the person who leads a contemplative life cannot dispense with them; he must share his abundance with others through the

[30] Erfurt, col. 64.
[31] Pfeiffer, 611, 11; 179, 1.
[32] Pfeiffer, 171, 14; Sievers, op. cit., p. 404.
[33] The mark was formerly a half-pound of gold or silver.
[34] Pfeiffer, 178, 35.

exercises of the active life.'"[35] "Christ said, 'Let your light shine before men.'[36] He meant in a special manner those who are intent on contemplation alone and who do not devote themselves to any moral activity; those also who think it unnecessary to exercise themselves in virtue, because they have passed beyond this stage. It was not to such that Our Lord alluded when he said The seed 'fell upon good ground; and being sprung up, yielded fruit a hundredfold.'[37] But He did think of them when He said: 'Every tree therefore that doth not yield good fruit shall be cut down' (Matt. III:10)."[38] "If a person is so infirm or aged as not to be able to perform corporal works, let him keep to interior spiritual works, such as good will and love of God, which are besides nobler and greater in the sight of God than exterior works."[39] "I admit that a person in actual contemplation may and ought to omit all exterior works the while he is in the state of contemplation; but afterwards he should again exercise himself in exterior works, for no one can remain continually in contemplation; the active life must take the place of the contemplative."[40]

In connection with this orthodox teaching on good works, Eckehart's errors on the same subject appear in a somewhat strange light. His interpretation of these words of Our Lord: "I have chosen you and appointed you, that you should go and should bring forth fruit,"[41] forms the eighteenth condemned article.[42] "He wishes to say that we ought not to bring forth the fruit of exterior acts which do not benefit us, but the fruit of interior works, which the Father who dwells in us effects

[35]Pfeiffer, 607, 30.
[36]Matt. V, 16.
[37]Luke VIII, 8.
[38]Pfeiffer, 19, 6.
[39]Sievers, op. cit., no. 6.
[40]Pfeiffer, 608. 2.
[41]John XV, 6.
[42]Afferamus fructum actuum non exteriorum, qui nos bonos non faciunt, sed actuum interiorum, quos pater in nobis manens facit et operatur.

and produces.''[43] The sixteenth and seventeenth articles contain the erroneous thought that exterior works are not inspired by God. ''God does not really suggest an exterior act, since it can prove a hindrance to the soul.''[44] ''An exterior act is, properly speaking, neither good nor divine, nor does God really effect or produce it.''[45] When interpreting these words of Wisdom, ''who lovest souls'' (Wis., XI:27) Eckehart adds: ''This is what is implied —Thou who lovest souls, but dost not love exterior works.''[46] Such statements as the following certainly contain quietistic principles: ''An exterior work is neither good, nor holy, nor blessed, nor unblessed'';[47] ''number adds little to the value of the prayer; for one Ave said with a whole heart and a detached heart is better than a thousand psalters recited orally.''[48] How can propositions such as these be reconciled with Eckehart's clear and decisive teaching of the necessity of good works and of their supernatural merit? To say the least Eckehart often tries his reader's patience by his inconsistency.

The Latin works extant contain but little on the subject of virtue and good works. The proper place to study Eckehart's doctrine of virtue and good works is in the German sermons and treatises that aim to be purely ethical.

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[43]Cues manuscript, Archiv II, p. 683.

[44]Ibid. This is the sixteenth condemned proposition. Deus proprie non precipit actum exteriorem.

[45]Ibid. This is the seventeenth condemned proposition. Actus exterior non est proprie bonus nec divinus, nec operatur ipsum deus proprie neque parit.

[46]Erfurt, col. 159. Archiv II, p. 434. The nineteenth condemned proposition: Deus animas amat, non opus extra.

[47]Pfeiffer, 72, 23; this corresponds to the seventeenth proposition.

[48]Pfeiffer, 611, 25; this corresponds to the nineteenth proposition.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOUL

God never created anything so like to His own image as the human soul. "All other creatures are but the footprints of God, as it were, but the soul is His image."[1] It is in virtue of this likeness that "God is the form and the soul of the soul."[2] It is only when we contemplate God that we can see in what this image consists. "The soul is threefold in its powers but simple in its nature. Although the soul is present in all the members of the body, it is, nevertheless, entire in each member; hence all the members of the body form one simple abode of the soul. The soul also possesses a certain foreknowledge, and forms an idea in advance of those things which lie within its power. All that can be said of God is found to a limited extent as an image in the soul."[3]

Like all the scholastics Eckehart considers the soul, which is simple and spiritual, as the substantial form of the body; as such it is not subject to the conditions of space and time.[4] "The soul is more than thousandfold and is, nevertheless, entire in every member; in the fingers, in the eyes, the heart, and in every part of every member, whether large or small."[5] "If a man have a dear friend one thousand miles away, his soul and all its faculties can span this distance and there love his friend. As St. Augustine says: The soul is more present where it loves than where it gives life."[6] "Yea, in very truth, that which is a thousand miles farther away from me than is Jerusalem, is as near to my soul as my own body; of that I am as certain as that I am a human being."[7]

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[1] Pfeiffer, 11, 7.
[2] Pfeiffer, 658, 22.
[3] Pfeiffer, 386, 15.
[4] Cf. St. Thomas, 1 p. qu. LXXVI, a. 8.
[5] Pfeiffer, 397, 21.
[6] Pfeiffer, 383, 28.
[7] Pfeiffer, 257, 18.

The soul operates by means of its faculties[8] and not through its nature. The lower faculties, which Eckehart designates as the woman of the soul, are the reason (rationale), the irascible powers (irascibile), and the concupiscible powers (concupiscibile).[9] The higher faculties of the soul are the memory (memoria), the understanding (intellectus), and the will (voluntas). These he calls the man of the soul. "The memory is the receptive faculty for all the other faculties."[10] "The intellect emanates first from the soul, next the will, and then the other powers follow."[11] "The intellect is the superior part of the soul."[12] The first object of our knowledge, according to St. Thomas, is the *quiddity* of a thing, what it is, its being, and this is the proper object of the intellect,[13] a doctrine which Eckehart expresses as follows: "The intellect penetrates into the being of the thing before it considers its goodness, or power, or wisdom, or whatever is accidental . . . it penetrates into the very being, where it apprehends God as pure being."[14] "Only after the intellect has recognized true being, will it be at rest in its search, and form an opinion on the object with which it is occupied. So long as the intellect has not actually found the true being, nor really comprehended its true basis, so that it can say: It is *this* and nothing else, so long is it lost in its search, and will not come to any repose, but seeks and abstracts."[15]

Like many great scholastics before him, Eckehart adopts the Aristotelian distinction of the active reason and the passive or potential reason. These are not to be considered as two different faculties opposed to each other, but as two distinct phases of the same faculty. He

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[8]Pfeiffer 4, 29. St. Thomas, 1 p. qu. LXXIX, a. 1; LXXVII, a. 1.
[9]Pfeiffer, 70, 30. St. Thomas, 1 p. qu. LXXXI, a. 1.
[10]Pfeiffer, 383, 36.
[11]Pfeiffer, 255, 6.
[12]Pfeiffer, 253, 32.
[13]St. Thomas, 1 p. qu. LXXXVIII, a. 3.
[14]Pfeiffer, 110, 8; 383, 38.
[15]Pfeiffer, 20, 23.

calls them the two sons of the intellect.[16] "The active reason forms an image of exterior things from which it abstracts all that is material and accidental, and then conveys this abstract image to the passive reason. When the passive intellect has been thus charged, as it were, by the active intellect, it retains and recognizes objects within itself. However, the active intellect must enlighten it whenever it wishes to recall them.[17] The active intellect can bring forth only one image at a time, but when God acts in its stead, He produces simultaneously a variety of images in the passive intellect."[18] In another place Eckehart mentions three forms of the intellect. "Man possesses an active, a passive, and a potential intellect. The first is always ready to effect something, either in God or in creatures for God's honor and glory; that is its province; it is called the active intellect. When, however, God undertakes this work, then the mind must hold itself passive. The potential intellect is directed towards both, that God's operation and the passivity of the mind may be made possible."[19]

The will is free to command what it wants, and to forbid what it does not want.[20] God Himself respects this freedom of the will and does not force it. As long as the soul sojourns in the body, it is free to act as it pleases.[21] Although the will enjoys this liberty, it requires the assistance of the other faculties and even of faith. They produce this effect in the will, because the simple nature of the soul is common to all its powers.[22]

Occasionally Eckehart refers to the strife between the Thomists and the Scotists as to which is more excellent, the intellect or the will, or rather which of these faculties unites man to God. "The masters ask whether the

[16]Pfeiffer, 110, 35.
[17]Pfeiffer, 19, 22.
[18]Pfeiffer, 20, 1.
[19]Pfeiffer, 16, 35.
[20]Pfeiffer, 384, 1.
[21]Pfeiffer, 509, 35.
[22]Pfeiffer, 384, 18.

will or the intellect contains the germ of eternal life. The will has two operations—desire and love. The work of the intellect is simple and therefore better; its object is to know, and it never rests until it comes into contact with what it knows."[23] "There is question as to which is superior, the intellect or the will. The superiority of the intellect lies in the fact that it understands things which at present differ from one another. It is through this understanding alone that the will effects anything. . . . And because the operation of the intellect stops here, the power of the will must now shine forth in this light and in the greatness of faith. Then, too, the will seeks to rise above all intelligence. This constitutes the superiority of the will. . . . The intellect now comes forth to perceive. It differentiates, and classifies, and places. When it has reached the summit of its power, there yet remains a higher field into which it cannot penetrate and which it recognizes as higher. This it communicates to the will in virtue of the unity of its nature and not in virtue of its power. With this knowledge it elevates the will into this higher field, all through the unity of its nature. In this respect the understanding is superior to the will. But the will is superior as regards equality—there the will is at its highest and is a recipient from the Supreme Good, which is God Himself."[24]

The lower faculties act as mediums between the higher faculties and the outer senses and "therefore they approach close to these latter. What the eye sees or the ear hears, that particular sense presents to the desires or concupiscible powers. If the image is properly received, it is offered to the second power, the consideration, the irascible power. After this has contemplated the image, it presents it to the reason, the power which differentiates. Thus the image is constantly refined for

[23] Pfeiffer, 106, 29.
[24] Pfeiffer, 384, 6.

reception into the higher faculties."[25] In the lower consciousness man is wholly dependent on the experience of the senses; his knowledge is always mediated by images, is always marked by a *here* and a *now*. When the powers of the soul come into contact with an object, they abstract from this object an image or a likeness which they ideate. In this manner they gain their knowledge of an object; therefore man possesses no innate ideas, his intellect is a veritable *tabula rasa*. "Nothing can penetrate farther than this into the soul; the soul, moreover, does not occupy itself with any object whose image it has not ideated. It is only by means of the idea present in the mind . . . that the soul can approach near to creatures. If the soul wishes to recognize a stone, a rose, or a human being, or anything whatever, it must always begin by recalling a previous concept. Only in this manner can the soul unite itself closely with an object. But when such an image is formed, it must necessarily enter from without, through the senses.[26]

Since the soul can form no image of itself, it cannot, consequently, know itself. No human skill has ever fathomed what the soul is. "The word *soul* tells us as little about the nature of the soul, as the name *God* does about the Divinity."[27] "As little as God can be comprehended under names and words, just as little can the soul be comprehended under images and forms."[28] "What is the nature of the soul? Note well: The final certainty in the soul regarding itself is its simple nature. The nature of the soul is so simple that space cannot hinder it."[29] "We may know a little about the soul, but what it really is in its basis, nobody knows. Whatever we know about this must be acquired through supernatural means; it must be the work of grace."[30]

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[25] Pfeiffer, 383, 12.
[26] Pfeiffer, 5, 11.
[27] Sievers, op. cit., no. 16; Pfeiffer, 5, 19, 24.
[28] Pfeiffer 405, 1.
[29] Pfeiffer, 383, 24.
[30] Pfeiffer, 228, 15.

The soul has two faces. "The upper one beholds God continually while the lower one gazes downwards and directs the senses. The former is the highest point of the soul; it dwells in eternity and has nothing to do with time, for it knows nothing either of time or of the body. In this apex is concealed something like the source of all good and like a bright light that always illumines, and like a burning fire that always burns, and this fire is naught else but the Holy Spirit."[31] "The soul is so noble, because it reaches out to time and eternity. If it inclines more to temporal things, it becomes fickle; if it keeps to what is eternal, it grows steadfast and strong; and with the strength and steadfastness it rises above temporal things."[32] These two faces correspond to what St. Augustine calls the higher and lower reason, the former of which is intent on the contemplation of things eternal, while the lower is busied with the disposal of temporal affairs.

It is in this basis of the soul, whither no creature has ever penetrated, that the faculties originate. Eckehart calls this basis of the soul by various names as, "apex of the soul,"[33] "spark,"[34] "glimmering,"[35] "*mens*,"[36] "man of the soul,"[37] "reason,"[38] "a power of the soul in which God is ever present,"[39] "it is the highest and the lowest in the soul,"[40] "a nameless something,"[41] "a light."[42] "I have at times said that there is a power in the soul which alone is free. Sometimes I have called it a tabernacle of the spirit; sometimes a light of the mind; sometimes a spark; but I say now it is neither

[31] Pfeiffer, 59, 4; 250, 37.
[32] Sievers, op. cit., no. 11.
[33] Pfeiffer, 52, 39.
[34] Pfeiffer, 139, 7; 392, 20.
[35] Pfeiffer, 79, 6.
[36] Pfeiffer, 670 38.
[37] Pfeiffer, 199, 25.
[38] Sievers, op. cit., p. 377.
[39] Pfeiffer, 44, 25.
[40] Pfeiffer, 207, 5.
[41] Pfeiffer, 306, 9.
[42] Pfeiffer, 410, 35; 412, 25.

this nor that; it is higher than this or that, higher than the heavens above the earth."[43] Eckehart also employs the word "synteresis."[44]

His use of the term "scintilla"—the spark—clearly shows its derivation from "synteresis"; he describes it as a light from above.[45] He also speaks of this light as something uncreated, as closely akin to God. "I have often spoken of a light in the soul which is uncreated and uncreatable."[46] "I affirm that there is something above the soul's created nature . . . so clearly related to God as to be one with Him. . . . All that is created or is creatable is nothing. But that something is far removed from all creation and from all that can be created."[47] This doctrine of the uncreated something in the soul is the twenty-seventh article condemned by John XXII.[48]

Here it might be asked how the soul apprehends God. "The cherubim denote wisdom, that is knowledge, which brings God into the soul and leads the soul to God. But it cannot bring the soul into God. Therefore God does not perform His divine work in the cognitive faculty, by which the soul comprehends things according to time and space, for He operates as God and in a divine manner. Then the highest power, which is love, comes forward and enters into God, and leads the soul with the cognitive power and with all its faculties into God and unites them to Him. Then God operates above the powers of the soul, not as in the soul, but as in God."[49] "Nothing so prevents the soul from knowing God as time and space.

[43]Pfeiffer, 46, 3.

[44]Pfeiffer, 113, 40. All the scholastics from the days of William of Auvergne designate the synteresis as "scintilla conscientiae." St. Bonaventure defines it as "apex mentis seu scintilla." Hermann of Fritzlar speaks of it as a power or a faculty in the soul.

[45]R. Leiher, Name und Begriff der Synteresis. Philosophisches Jahrbuch, 1912 p. 374.

[46]Pfeiffer, 193, 16.

[47]Pfeiffer, 234, 36; 286, 17.

[48]Aliquid est in anima, quod est increatum et increabile; si tota anima esset talis, esset increata et increabilis, et hoc est intellectus.

[49]Pfeiffer, 153, 26.

Since time and space are parts and God is one, the soul in order to know God must transcend time and space; for God is neither this nor that, as creatures are in their manifoldness; God is one. If the soul is to perceive God, it must not perceive anything in time; for while the soul regards time or space or any image, it can never behold God. That the eye may recognize color, it must itself be without any color. If the soul is to know God, it must have no intercourse with *nothingness*. He who knows God knows also that all creatures are nothing. When one creature is compared with another it may appear beautiful and to be something, but when it is compared with God it is nothing.''[50] It is only when the soul casts itself into the depths of its own nothingness that it can through grace know God as He is;[51] then will God so diffuse Himself into the soul that the light of His presence will overflow into the soul's faculties.[52] And this is the Divine Birth in the soul.

A summary of Eckehart's teaching in regard to the soul shows it to embrace the following points: (1) The human soul is an image of the triune God in its threefold power and its simple nature. (2) The soul is simple and spiritual, the substantial form of the body. (3) The soul operates through its faculties. (4) The lower faculties are the reason, the irascible, and the concupiscible powers. (5) The higher faculties are the memory, the intellect, and the will. The memory is the receptive power. The intellect is the superior part of the soul; its object is to know. Eckehart distinguishes between the active and the passive intellect. The will is free, even God does not force it. (6) The lower faculties act as mediums between the higher faculties and the outer senses. (7) The soul depends for its knowledge on the experience of the senses, consequently it can never know

[50] Pfeiffer, 222, 24.
[51] Pfeiffer, 513, 12.
[52] Pfeiffer, 11, 35.

itself. (8) The basis of the soul, in which God is ever present, is something uncreated and uncreatable; a proposition condemned as heretical. (9) The soul does not apprehend God by the cognitive power but by love, which leads the soul with all its faculties into God and unites it to Him.

CHAPTER IX

THE MYSTIC UNION OR THE DIVINE BIRTH IN THE SOUL

The soul's constant and insatiable longing for happiness, its restless, yea, often fruitless search after this highest good in the things of earth, renders it all the more eager to attain it where alone it can be found—in God. Eckehart expresses this earnest desire of the soul in many places of his works. "The soul is created for so high and great a good that it cannot possibly be at rest, but is ever hastening forward to arrive at this eternal bliss, which is God, and for which alone it was created.'"[1] "If God were to give my soul all that He ever created or may yet create, and did not give Himself, my soul should not be content and I could not be happy.'"[2]

Eckehart terms this union of the soul with God the Divine Birth in the soul of the just. All his thoughts seem to circle continually around this, for him, all-important truth and to seek for some new expression, some new means, of making this Divine Birth intelligible to his hearers. The birth of God in the soul and of the soul in God is of such paramount importance, he teaches, that it is for this alone that we pray and fast, and perform good works; in a word are Christians, and for this alone God became incarnate. The Sacred Scriptures were written and the world was created that this twofold birth might take place—God in the soul and the soul in God.[3]

Since this intimate union with God is the ardent desire of the soul, how, it may be asked, can the soul realize this innate longing? The preceding chapter shows how the soul by means of its various faculties and powers comes into contact with the exterior world. The soul projects itself through the senses outwards to creatures,

[1] Pfeiffer, 178, 9.
[2] Pfeiffer, 32 10.
[3] Sievers, op. cit., p. 377; Pfeiffer, 104, 27.

by whom it is drawn downwards; hence the soul that wishes to arrive at the mystic union must follow a course directly opposite. It must withdraw and concentrate itself inwards and then take an ascending direction. The deep abyss of the soul in which God reposes never opens outwardly; it is the *sanctum sanctorum* open only to God, into which no image of the exterior world can penetrate to disturb its sacred stillness. Here in this abyss of the soul, God the Father begets His only-begotten Son. But how and when does this birth of the Son take place? This occurs only when the soul wholly renounces the affairs of time and completely abandons itself to God and His providence. Hence we can readily see why Eckehart lays such great stress on the virtues of renunciation and self-denial. Before his time, the Victorines, and after him, all the great German mystics, for instance, Tauler and Suso, as well as the noted Spanish mystics, St. John of the Cross and the seraphic St. Teresa, not to speak of innumerable others since their day, all lay down the same rule of renunciation even to death of self, the *sine qua non* of the mystic union.

It must be admitted that a life which withdraws itself from the shadow of deliberate faults, which labors to free itself from imperfections and all returns of self-love, which submits besides to the purifying fire of a severe and continual mortification, which nourishes itself by prayer, and becomes habitually more recollected and fervent; such a life predisposes more than any other to the highest graces of prayer. Such a preparation, if it is not sufficient, is at least morally necessary.[4]

This preparation although negative, is in reality a very active conflict with self, a battle unto death against disorderly inclinations, against all that opposes the reign of Christ in the soul. Eckehart considers total renunciation, the setting aside of every form of egoism, and the

[4] Léonce de Grandmaison, La Religion personelle. Etudes, CXXXV, p. 333.

giving up of every creature in order to arrive at union with the Divinity as the supreme end of religion. He teaches that suffering is the most efficacious means to attain this end.[5] The first requisite for him who wishes to be united to God is "that he deny himself in all things, that he be attached to nothing, that his senses . . . dwell on no creature either in time or in eternity."[6] "God will not be born except in a soul that has trampled all greatness under foot."[7] That God may operate freely in a soul this renunciation must be complete, it must extend to all things; such a one rests upon pure *nothingness.*"[8] "True renunciation demands that in all that may happen, whether agreeable or disagreeable, honorable or disgraceful, the spirit be as immovable as a great mountain in a light breeze."[9] "And no one can come to this union so long as he is affected by the least temporal thing, although it is no more than the point of a needle can hold. No one can enter into the Godhead unless he is as void as he was when he emanated from God."[10]

This renunciation to be complete must extend not only to exterior things, but to oneself as well. "Our souls, too, must be sorrowful even unto death, until all self-will and self-interest be killed within us. When the soul has died thus to its desires and its own interests and is buried in God, then it is hidden from and unknown to all creatures and it can never again be saddened."[11] In this manner must the soul die to a sensual, agitated world, liable to corruption and destined to perish. Not once only must the poor struggling soul die this death, but, as Tauler says, a thousand deaths will be necessary before the soul is wholly purified. Such a soul takes events, even

[5]Lichtenberger, Le Mysticisme Allemand. Revue des Cours et Conférences, 1910, p. 684.
[6]Pfeiffer, 197, 18.
[7]Pfeiffer, 151, 11.
[8]Pfeiffer, 490, 14. Everything outside of God is not God, therefore nothing (non-being).
[9]Pfeiffer, 486, 36.
[10]Pfeiffer, 77, 23.
[11]Pfeiffer 242, 19.

untoward ones, from whatever source they come, as sent by God for its greater sanctification. "You must know that to those who have given themselves to God and with all diligence seek His will, whatever God gives them is necessarily the best; you may be as certain of this as that God lives. Should something else seem better, yet it could not be so good for thee, for God wants it in this way and not in that, and therefore this way must necessarily be the best for thee."[12] This mystic death is an experience common to all the mystics. St. Teresa frequently refers to a period when all preceding graces are forgotten, to a state of death, of troubles, of disgust, stupor, and indifference, a state in which the soul is powerless to pray; nevertheless it continues its accustomed exercise of piety and virtue.[13] St. John of the Cross treats of this mystic death in the *Two Nights of the Soul.* Perhaps no one has left a more graphic description of this painful state than Bl. Henry Suso.

Eckehart does not for an instant suppose that this continual self-denial implies no feeling on our part. "Now our good people say we ought to become so perfect that no love can move us, and that we must be impassable to love and sorrow. They wrong us; I say there never was a saint so great that he could not be moved by events. Thou imaginest because words please or displease thee, that thou art imperfect? Such is not the case; Christ Our Lord felt them, as He showed when He said: 'My soul is sorrowful even unto death.' Words pained him so much, that if the sorrows of all creatures fell upon one creature, they would not be so great as was Our Lord's sorrow; this was on account of the nobility of His nature and the sacred union of the divine and human natures. Therefore, I say, there never was and there never will be a saint whom sorrow does not pain

[12]Pfeiffer, 134, 8.

[13]Way of Perfection, ch. XXVIII; Interior Castle, Sixth Mansion, ch. I, 3, 13, 14.

and love does not please.''[14] And all this renunciation must be practised for God alone, without any thought of reward, abandoning all such considerations to His good pleasure. Eckehart calls such souls merchants, ''who fast, watch, pray, and perform other good works and this only that the Lord may give them something in return, or do something that is pleasing to them; these are all merchants.''[15] ''A devout person must not seek himself in his good works, but God's honor alone. So long as in thy good works thou art intent on thyself, or on one person more than on another, so long God's will is not thy will.''[16]

''What is the prayer of a heart so completely detached? I answer: Detachment and simplicity cannot in fact pray. For he who prays, either asks God to grant him something or else he desires that God take something away from him. But the wholly detached heart desires nothing and possesses nothing from which it wishes to be delivered. Hence it is void of all prayer, and its prayer consists only in being one with God.''[17] This last quotation embodies some of the principles of Quietism. The Quietist demands that when the soul is in the state of ''quietude'' the mind be wholly inactive; that it no longer think or act on its own account, but remain passive while God acts within it. In fact the very desire of activity is offensive to God, one must abandon himself entirely to God.[18] The great virtue of the Quietists is conformity to the will of God, complete abandonment, literally asking nothing, desiring nothing. It will be noted that seven[19] of the condemned propositions contain quietistic tendencies. Four (XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX) which relate more particularly to good works are men-

[14]Pfeiffer, 52, 18.
[15]Pfeiffer, 34, 12.
[16]Pfeiffer, 55, 39.
[17]Pfeiffer, 490, 27; Büttner, op. cit., p. 27.
[18]E. A. Pace, Quietism. Catholic Encyclopedia XI, p. 608. New York, 1913.
[19]Articles VIII, IX, XIV, XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX.

tioned in the chapter on "Virtue and Good Works," while the eighth is found in the chapter on "Sin and the Redemption." The following corresponds to the ninth proposition:[20] "I reflected lately whether I ought to take or to desire anything of God. I shall indeed consider it well; for were I to accept anything from God, I should be beneath God as a servant beneath his master. We shall not be thus in eternal life."[21]

Mystic writers lay great stress on the cessation of discursive action; for there can be no mystic intuition until all conscious and reflective thought ceases, until the spirit, void of created images, withdraws and concentrates itself in its very abyss. It is here in the basis of the soul that God dwells and where the void and passive spirit plunges into the uncreated image of God to seek peace and rest. This is why Eckehart calls the state of passivity the secret passage of the soul to the Divinity. In his writings he frequently refers to this interior void and passivity of the soul. "This know for certain; if anyone else than Jesus alone wishes to speak in this temple, then Jesus is silent, as though He were not at home in the soul, for there are strange guests present with whom the soul prefers to converse. But if Jesus is to speak, the soul must be solitary and silent if it desires to hear Him."[22] "Thou canst not without great injury to thyself turn away from this state to another."[23] The more void of images thou art, the more receptive thou wilt be for His operations; and the more thou withdrawest thyself inwardly and art unmindful of all things, the nearer thou art to this operation."[24]

The mystical union of the soul with God, or as Ecke-

[20]Ego nuper cogitavi, utrum ego vellem aliquid recipere a deo vel desiderare: ego volo de hoc valde bene deliberare, quia ubi ego essem accipiens a deo, ibi essem ego sub eo vel infra eum, sicut unus famulus vel servus, et ipse sicut dominus in dando et sic non debemus esse in eterna vita.

[21]Pfeiffer, 205, 36.

[22]Pfeiffer, 36, 30.

[23]Pfeiffer, 27, 16.

[24]Pfeiffer, 7, 39.

hart calls it, the Divine Birth in the soul, depends entirely on God; no human effort can effect this transcending grace. The mystic feels he is not the master of these states, neither in the beginning, the middle, nor the end, since they appear without any effort on his part, suddenly, and apparently without any cause. All that he can do is merely negative, is to remove the obstacles that oppose this union; he can in some measure prepare his soul by renunciation and great purity of heart; but the union itself must always be the work of God alone. "Whoever reposes in God does not enjoy this repose because he willed it."[25] "God performs this work in the innermost part of the soul and so secretly that neither angel nor saint can know it; and the soul itself can do nothing but remain passive; it is God's work alone."[26] "If this birth is to take place in thee, it must proceed entirely from God. All thy efforts must lie in abeyance, all thy powers must serve His aims and not thine; if the work is to be perfected, God alone must perform it and thou must merely suffer it."[27]

Since this Divine Birth depends solely on the good pleasure of God, He can give it and can withdraw it just as He wills.[28] "The more frequently this birth occurs in the soul, the more closely is the soul united to God. God is born in the soul that is void of images by revealing Himself to it in a new manner, . . . in an enlightment that is the divine light itself."[29] Knowledge and union with God are the two elements which the mystic experience always includes; a knowledge that has nothing intellectual, nothing discursive; it is God revealing Himself to the soul with such a great light that it overflows into the faculties and even into the exterior man. Eckehart goes so far as to say that God

[25]Pfeiffer, 130, 35.
[26]Pfeiffer, 160, 16.
[27]Pfeiffer, 25, 11.
[28]Pfeiffer, 18 2.
[29]Büttner, op. cit., p. 27.

created the soul for the one purpose that in it His beloved Son might be born; "and whenever and wherever this birth takes place, it is more joyful to God than the creation of heaven and earth, because the soul is nobler and greater than the heavens."[30] "When the will is so united as to be uniform, then the Eternal Father generates His only-begotten Son in Himself and in me. Why in Himself? Why in me? Then I am one with Him and He cannot exclude me; in this operation the Holy Ghost receives from me as well as from God, His nature, His work, and His being, because I am in God. If He does not take it from me neither does He take it from God; He cannot exclude me in any way whatever."[31] How does the Father generate His Son in the soul? As creatures do by means of image and likeness? "Not at all. But in the very same way that He produces Him eternally. God the Father has a perfect contemplation and a thorough knowledge of Himself but not by means of an image. And thus the Father generates the Son in the union of the divine nature. In this manner and in no other does God the Father generate His Son in the basis and essence of the soul and unite it to Himself."[32] "God enters into the soul, and there causes a vehement outburst of divine love, which bears the soul back to God. . . . When the soul with its intellect comprehends anything in regard to God, it passes this knowledge on to the will, which then so absorbs it as to become one with it. Then the will conveys it to the memory. Thus is God borne into the soul. . . . This outburst of divine love now overflows into the soul, causing the higher faculties to diffuse themselves into the lower ones and these into the outer man and thus elevating him out of all that is low, so that he desires only what is spiritual. For as the spirit operates according to the divine impulse,

[30] Pfeiffer, 401, 5.
[31] Pfeiffer, 55, 22.
[32] Pfeiffer, 6, 5.

so must the exterior man operate according to the impulse of the spirit. Oh, wonder after wonder when I reflect on the union of the soul with God! . . . The outburst of divine love which inundates the soul, carries it out of itself into its origin, into God."[33] "In this manner have love and the sweetness of devotion allured the spirit out of itself by means of the simple spark it possesses! What joy for the soul! I can only say that the glance which passes without interruption from the spirit into the simple Godhead, that the flux which flows unceasingly from the Godhead into the void spirit, so completely transforms the spirit into God and unites it to Him, that it receives as an equal from an equal. The delight the spirit experiences in this embrace is above all comprehension. I am unable to say aught else than that the spirit is then at the summit of its power and greatness."[34]

The delight which the divine generation operates in the soul is so ineffable, so far beyond every human joy, that an experimental knowledge alone can give us any idea of the superabundant happiness the privileged soul enjoys. It must be remembered that according to all the great mystics God often favors the soul when in ecstasy with intellectual visions, such that "it is not fitting for man while living in the world to understand them in a way that can be told;"[35] it can easily be comprehended, therefore, how the mystic falls at times into exaggerations of speech. Whenever Eckehart speaks of this delight, transcending all earthly bliss, he seems to find the most extravagant language too cold, too inexpressive. "If a person who has renounced much for God were yet to suffer all that mankind combined has ever suffered, and were to endure this until death, and if God were then to give him one instant of divine contemplation, his joy

[33] Pfeiffer, 385, 17.
[34] Pfeiffer, 392, 19.
[35] St. Teresa, The Interior Castle, Sixth Mansion, ch. IV, 5, 6, 12, 13. Way of Perfection, ch. XXXIV.

would be so great that all his suffering and poverty should seem to him too little."[36] "He whom this glance has never wounded, his soul has never been wounded by the love of God."[37]

The soul favored with the mystic union finds itself powerfully aided in overcoming defects, in seeking God alone, in being freed from harassing doubts, by the divine light which illuminates the understanding and teaches the soul the most profound truths. But let us hear Meister Eckehart tell this in his own burning words: "When the soul is wholly united to God and plunged, as it were, in the divine nature, it sees all its difficulties and defects and unsteadiness vanish; it finds itself suddenly renewed in a divine life, well ordered in all its habits even in its very virtues."[38] "The first effect that the sight of the Holy Ghost produces in the soul is that all its sins are remitted, and the soul and all things become contemptible in its own sight."[39] "I believe such a person incapable of falling into mortal sin; for he would suffer the most shameful death rather than commit the least mortal sin. . . . Yea, he is not able to commit a venial sin or to permit it knowingly either in himself or in another, when he can prevent it."[40] ¶ In this birth God pours Himself with such abundance of light into the soul, in the essence and basis of which it so increases as to overflow into the soul's powers and even into the exterior man. . . . Thou canst recognize it for thy heart feels itself strangely moved and turned away from the world; how could this be effected except through the radiation of the light, which is so softened, which produces such delight, that everything else which is not God or does not refer to Him becomes tiresome to thee? . . . As soon as God with His truth interiorly touches

[36] Pfeiffer, 44, 34.
[37] Pfeiffer, 401, 34.
[38] Pfeiffer, 154, 3; 37, 27.
[39] Pfeiffer, 242, 26.
[40] Pfeiffer, 10, 17.

the basis of the soul, light penetrates into the faculties; and that person learns more in an instant than anyone could teach him."[41] "Whatever perfection is to enter the soul, whether of divine illumination, of grace, or of happiness, must all come through this birth, there is no other means. Await this birth in thee and thou wilt have every good, every delight, every comfort, every being, and every truth. Neglect this one thing and thou wilt neglect every good and every beatitude."[42]

When this birth takes place in the soul then "each of its faculties becomes an image of the Divine Persons; the will of the Holy Ghost, the cognitive powers of the Son, and the memory of the Father. And its nature becomes the likeness of the divine nature."[43] "The Son comes into the soul and is born there with all that God can accomplish—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all in pure being."[44] "When the Father generates His Son in me, then I am the same son and not another."[45] This last quotation is the substance of the twentieth condemned proposition.[46] "The Father generates me as His son. . . . All that God does is one; therefore He generates me as His son without any distinction";[47] this is the twenty-second condemned article[48] and is closely related to the following: "That man has the same essence, and nature, and substance, and wisdom, and joy, and all that God has. Then the same nature of the Son is his and is in him."[49] "We shall be so transformed into God as the bread in the sacrament is changed into Our Lord's Body. . . . I shall be so changed into Him

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[41]Pfeiffer 11, 35; 221, 24.
[42]Pfeiffer, 11, 11.
[43]Pfeiffer, 386, 34.
[44]Pfeiffer, 166, 17.
[45]Pfeiffer, 137, 16; 70, 12.
[46]Quod bonus homo est unigenitus filius dei.
[47]Pfeiffer, 205, 8.
[48]Pater generat me suum filium et eundem filium. Quicquid deus operatur, hoc est unum, propter hoc generat ipse me suum filium sine omni distinctione.
[49]Pfeiffer, 41, 24.

that He will make me the same being as Himself; by the living God it is true that then there will be no distinction.''[50] This last is the exact text of the tenth condemned proposition.[51] ''The man who rises above time into eternity, cooperates with God in all that He created thousands of years ago'';[52] here is found substantially the thirteenth condemned proposition.[53]

Thus man appears as the organ of the perfect self-birth of God. Man must be born as the son of God, for no other purpose than that the Son of God may thus be born in human shape in him. Man is to become God in order that in him God may become man. Here we have the pantheistic idea of emanation which lies at the root of all this mysticism. In this theory the essential difference between the incarnation of God in Christ and His incarnation in all other men disappears. If, by the birth of the Son of God in us, we become sons of God, not by adoption, but by nature; it is not easy to understand what prerogative Christ enjoys beyond ourselves. Indeed Eckehart teaches that we possess everything, without exception, that God imparted to Christ, the Man-God.[54] ''All that God ever gave His only-begotten Son, He gave the same to me and no less perfectly than to Him.''[55] Therefore what the Holy Scripture says of Christ may be said of every saintly man.[56]

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[50]Pfeiffer 205, 21.

[51]Nos transformamur totaliter in deum et convertimur in eum; simili modo, sicut in sacramento panis convertitur in corpus Christi; sic ego convertor in eum, quod ipse me operatur suum esse unum, non simile; per viventem deum verum est, quod ibi nulla est distinctio.

[52]Pfeiffer, 190, 37; 199, 12; 207, 13.

[53]Quicquid proprium est divine nature, hoc totum proprium est homini iusto et divino; propter hoc iste homo operatur quicquid deus operatur, et creavit una cum deo celum et terram, et est generator verbi eterni, et deus sine tali homine nesciret quicquam facere.

[54]Stöckl, History of Philosophy, p. 440. Trans. by T. A. Finlay. London, 1903.

[55]Pfeiffer, 56, 18. The eleventh condemned proposition. Quicquid deus pater dedit filio suo unigenito in humana natura, hoc totum dedit michi: hic nihil excipio, nec unionem nec sanctitatem, sed totum dedit michi sicut sibi.

[56]The twelfth condemned article. Quicquid dicit sacra scriptura de Christo, hoc etiam totum verificatur de omni bono et divino homine.

In one of his sermons on the following text: "In all things I sought rest,"[57] Eckehart gives some of the differences between the active and the contemplative life. "The contemplation and love of the interior person may last longer, although it is very short in the highest contemplation, for this great influx of light cannot last long; it passes quickly with the speed of lightning. St. Augustine says: The ordinary exercise of the interior person in knowledge and love may continue longer than the exercise of the exterior person. The life of the interior man in its repose and leisure of spirit resembles somewhat the repose of the eternal Divine Being. . . . But the life of the exterior man is one continual motion. Therefore Mary sat and Martha went about the house. . . . The inner life is more at peace with itself than the outer life. . . . Hence St. Luke says that Martha, who represents the life of the exterior man, was saddened with many cares; although all this is done for God, nevertheless, as is experienced in works of mercy, it engenders much sadness. The inner life is beyond measure happier than the exterior life."[58]

To these advantages Eckehart adds that the contemplative life is of itself more desirable; it is wholly directed towards divine things; it is confined to the highest mental powers; and finally, Our Lord Himself has said that Mary hath chosen the better part. "Although Mary received the praise of having chosen the better part, still Martha's life was also very useful, for she served Christ and His Apostles. St. Thomas says: 'The active life is then something better than the contemplative, when we pour out in love and action what we have garnered in contemplation.' But one and the same thing is present: we take from the same basis in which contemplation resides and whose content we fructify in action. In this way the real aim of contemplation is accomplished. Although

[57]Ecclus. XXIV, 11.
[58]Pfeiffer, 329, 10.

there is a change from the one to the other, it is all the same thing; it proceeds from the *same source,* which is God, and returns again to the same source, to God.[59] Eckehart seems here to place the active life above the contemplative, but this is only apparent. He only states with St. Thomas that when contemplation is over, the person should give out in action what he gathered in contemplation.

As regards Eckehart's doctrine concerning the mystic union, it is to be noted that he agrees with all the mystics who preceded him as to the distinct preparation necessary on the part of man, namely: the withdrawal and concentration of all the faculties in the basis of the soul; complete abandonment to God in all things, renouncing for this end every creature, and extending this self-denial even to death of self. Eckehart shows clearly that this self-annihilation does not imply the death of all feeling, for one will always experience pleasure when anything delights, and pain when it hurts. Furthermore, this abandonment must lead one to work for God alone with no thought of anything else, not even to ask for any grace or favor, a doctrine the Church condemned as quietistic. In the third place the soul must be void of all images and be passive, if God is to speak. Eckehart also agrees with all the mystics that this union depends on God alone; He alone can give and take it as He pleases. Indeed he goes so far as to say that the only reason why God created the soul is to bring forth in the soul His beloved Son. God generates His Son in the soul through knowledge and love. If this birth is a source of intense joy to the Father, it is of transcendent delight to the soul, a delight so ineffable that only he who has experienced it can understand and know it. The effects of this birth are truly marvelous: the soul sees its defects vanish; it seeks God alone; its understanding is illuminated, giving it a clear comprehension

[59]Pfeiffer, 18, 19.

of the most profound truths; in a word, it is a source of perfection.

Eckehart does not understand the sonship produced in the mystic union as that of adopted son of God but as a son of God by nature. There is absolutely no distinction between the only-begotten Son of God and the soul in whom this divine generation has taken place. Hence this doctrine of the only-begotten Son of God contains seven of the propositions condemned by the Church, the X, XI, XII. XX, XXI, XXII. It need not be surprising that pantheistic expressions occur in this part of Eckehart's teaching, as the subject of the ultimate return of the soul into God has frequently proved a danger for mystical speculation.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters have shown that Eckehart is a scholastic as well as a mystic, and that although several of his doctrines have been condemned by the Church, he was not personally a heretic; hence he cannot be brought into any active connection with the heretics of his day. He was a child of his time; and doubtless, the great religious ferment and the variety of doctrines abroad had some influence on his method of expressing his ideas. Böhmer believes that the fact of a special bull being issued to condemn a number of Eckehart's propositions without any reference to former decisions, is sufficient proof that he was not considered as belonging to any heretical sect, and therefore not one of the Brethren of the Free Spirit.[1]

Is Meister Eckehart a precursor of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century? This is the question that remains to be answered. Before replying, let us glance at some different opinions on this subject. Ullmann, after stating that although Eckehart's doctrine could in persons of a less intellectual and profound nature produce the most morally destructive effects, adds, however, that the penetration and boldness of his genius, as well as the deep piety of his nature, must at the same time be fully acknowledged. "Only it might perhaps be premature, on the score of this latter qualification, to class him as Arnold (Hist. Theol. Myst. Francof. 1702, p. 306) has done with the precursors of the Reformation.'"[2] Leopold Ziegler does not hesitate to affirm that "The German Master was certainly no Protestant in the sense of the Reformation.'"[3] Inge

[1]Böhmer, Meister Eckehart. Damaris, 1869, p. 89.

[2]Ullmann, Reformers before the Reformation II, p. 29. Trans. by R. Menzies. Edinburgh, 1855.

[3]Ziegler, Die philosophische und religiöse Bedeutung des Meister Eckehart. Preussisches Jahrbuch, March, 1904, vol. 115.

believes that the hierarchy and its reverence for the priesthood had no significance for Eckehart; that in this as in other ways he is a precursor of the Reformation.[4] If the treatise, "Swester Katrei" be accepted as genuine, then it must be admitted that Eckehart's greater reverence for the authority of a simple lay person in matters purely spiritual than for the authority of the teaching Church, indicates a tendency towards a universal priesthood. But "Swester Katrei" has been proved to be the work of some one of the heretical Beghards and was not written until after the death of Meister Eckehart. Lasson asserts that Eckehart's doctrine through its ethics paved the way for the Reformation.[5]

The fundamental principles of Protestantism are justification by faith and the universal priesthood of believers. According to justification by faith, the sinner reaches out for a righteousness which is complete in itself, namely the exterior righteousness of Christ. He takes it with the "arm of faith" and puts it on as a cloak of grace. Hence his sins are not really forgiven, they are only covered over with this cloak. This faith, which justifies, is not a firm belief in God's revealed truth and promises, but the infallible conviction that God, for the sake of Christ, will not impute to us our sins, but will consider and treat us as if we were really just and holy, although in our inner selves we remain the same sinners we were before. Hence faith alone suffices for justification; neither repentance nor penance, neither love of God nor good works nor any virtue is required.

In direct opposition to this doctrine, Eckehart teaches that God does not justify the sinner without the latter's cooperation. "He demands that the sinner help Him, for He will not sanctify thee without thy assistance."[6] Man must repent of his sins;[7] he must perform works of

[4] Inge, op. cit., p. 163.
[5] Lasson, German Mysticism in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, Überweg, History of Philosophy, I, p. 484.
[6] Pfeiffer, 216, 25; 200, 35.
[7] Pfeiffer, 361, 13.

penance to atone for them;[8] he must exercise himself in the love of God,[9] in virtue and in good works.[10] He distinctly teaches that good works are always necessary[11] even if the soul has advanced far in the way of perfection. Their value depends upon the intention wherewith they are performed; the greater the love that prompts them, the greater also the merit. This is the teaching of the Church, and it is a proof of the grossest ignorance of Catholic doctrine to suggest that we do not heed the interior disposition, the habitual direction of the personal will, but attend chiefly to exterior performance of the work. In accordance with Catholic doctrine, Eckehart likewise teaches that it is sanctifying grace that constitutes inner righteousness and is the only formal cause of our sanctification. "A soul in the state of grace is pure and an image of God."[12] That he understands sanctifying grace as a habit or state of the soul is proved by the following: "Grace does not operate, it unites us to God";[13] and this state lasts as long as the soul is free from grievous sin. "Mortal sin is the death of all grace."[14] Eckehart considers the Passion as the meritorious cause of grace (Cf. Ch. VI), for he says that Our Lord merited a superabundance of grace, more than sufficient to redeem the whole world. And finally, he teaches that the reception of the sacraments is the *instrumental cause* of grace. He frequently refers to the seven sacraments as "the means by which the soul is sanctified,"[15] but man is more especially sanctified through the Blessed Eucharist. "The more frequently thou receivest the Holy Eucharist, the better and more salutary it is for thee. . . . Now thou wouldst object

[8]Pfeiffer, 29, 12; 22, 35.
[9]Pfeiffer, 560, 38; 606, 31; 208, 22.
[10]Pfeiffer, 611, 11; 179, 1.
[11]Pfeiffer, 607, 30; 19, 6.
[12]Büttner, op. cit., p. 7.
[13]Ibid., p. 8.
[14]Pfeiffer, 217, 22.
[15]Pfeiffer, 328, 13.

that thou art devoid of all feeling, and art indolent, and dost not dare approach thy Lord. The greater need thou hast to receive thy God, for He will sanctify thee and unite thee to Himself, for this sacrament is the very source and fount of grace.'"[16] Eckehart has written an entire treatise on the advantages of the Blessed Eucharist.[17]

The following is often quoted as a proof that Eckehart did not regard the sacraments as means of grace, but instead considered them an obstacle and hindrance to pure spirituality. "Sacrament means an exterior sign. He who stops at the exterior sign cannot arrive at the inner truth, for the seven means of grace direct us to the one truth. . . . Some good people are an obstacle to themselves by insisting too much on contrition and confession, and thus they dwell on the exterior sign and do not bestir themselves to reach the simple truth.'"[18] Eckehart does not imply that we must refrain from using the sacraments, he simply wishes to say that we must advance from the external *opus operatum* to the spiritual significance and effect of the sacrament. He who insists too strongly on the exterior sign stops at that which appeals to the senses; it is this which draws us away from what is spiritual and so distracts us that we cannot pray in spirit and in truth.

The whole trend of Eckehart's doctrine, when judged impartially, and when the necessary allowance for his obscure and somewhat paradoxical style has been made, shows that he was neither consciously nor unconsciously a precursor of the Protestant Reformation, but a humble, loyal son of his mother, the Catholic Church. He erred, it is true, but let it not be forgotten that in his public retractation he unconditionally submitted his whole doctrinal system to the infallible authority of the Church.

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[16] Pfeiffer, 565, 24.
[17] Pfeiffer, 373.
[18] Pfeiffer, 239, 5.

APPENDIX

THE CONDEMNED ARTICLES

1. Interrogatus quandoque, quare deus mundum non prius produxerit, respondit tunc, sicut nunc, quod deus non potuit primo producere mundum, quia res non potest agere, antequam sit; unde quamcito deus fuit, tamcito mundum creavit.

2. Item concedit potest mundum fuisse ab eterno.

3. Item simul et semel, quando deus fuit, quando filium sibi coeternum per omnia coequalem deum genuit, etiam mundum creavit.

4. Item in omni opere, etiam malo, malo inquam tam pene, quam culpe, manifestatur et relucet equaliter gloria dei.

5. Item vituperans quempiam vituperio ipso peccato vituperii laudat deum, et quo plus vituperat et gravius peccat, amplius deum laudat.

6. Item deum ipsum quis blasphemando deum laudat.

7. Item quod petens hoc aut hoc malum petit et male, quia negationem boni et negationem dei petit, et orat deum sibi negari.

8. Qui non intendunt res, nec honores, nec utilitatem, nec devotionem internam, nec sanctitatem, nec premium, nec regnum celorum, sed omnibus hiis renuntiaverunt, etiam quod suum est, in illis hominibus honoratur deus.

9. Ego nuper cogitavi, utrum ego vellem aliquid recipere a deo vel desiderare: ego volo de hoc valde bene deliberare, quia ubi ego essem accipiens a deo, ibi essem ego sub eo vel infra eum, sicut unus famulus vel servus, et ipse sicut dominus in dando, et sic non debemus esse in eterna vita.

10. Nos transformamur totaliter in deum et convertimur in eum; simili modo, sicut in sacramento panis convertitur in corpus Christi: sic ego convertor in eum, quod ipse me operatur suum esse unum, non simile; per

viventem deum verum est, quod ibi nulla est distinctio.

11. Quicquid deus pater dedit filio suo unigenito in humana natura, hoc totum dedit michi: hic nihil excipio, nec unionem nec sanctitatem, sed totum dedit michi sicut sibi.

12. Quicquid dicit sacra scriptura de Christo, hoc etiam totum verificatur de omni bono et divino homine.

13. Quicquid proprium est divine nature, hoc totum proprium est homini iusto et divino; propter hoc iste homo operatur quicquid deus operatur, et creavit una cum deo celum et terram, et est generator verbi eterni, et deus sine tali homine nesciret quicquam facere.

14. Bonus homo debet sic conformare voluntatem suam voluntati divine, quod ipse velit quicquid deus vult: quia deus vult aliquo modo me peccasse, nollem ego, quod ego peccata non commisissem, et hec est vera penitentia.

15. Si homo commisisset mille peccata mortalia, si talis homo esset recte dispositus, non deberet velle se ea non commisisse.

16. Deus proprie non precipit actum exteriorem.

17. Actus exterior non est proprie bonus nec divinus, nec operatur ipsum deus proprie neque parit.

18. Afferamus fructum actuum non exteriorum, qui nos bonos non faciunt, sed actuum interiorum, quos pater in nobis manens facit et operatur.

19. Deus animas amat, non opus extra.

20. Quod bonus homo est unigenitus filius dei.

21. Homo nobilis est ille unigenitus filius dei, quem pater eternaliter genuit.

22. Pater generat me suum filium et eundem filium. Quicquid deus operatur, hoc est unum, propter hoc generat ipse me suum filium sine omni distinctione.

23. Deus est unus omnibus modis et secundum omnem rationem, ita ut in ipso non sit invenire aliquam multitudinem in intellectu vel extra intellectum: qui enim duo videt vel distinctionem videt, deum non videt, deus unus est extra numerum et supra numerum, nec ponit in unum

cum aliquo. Sequitur: nulla igitur distinctio in ipso deo esse potest aut intelligi.

24. Omnis distinctio est a deo aliena, neque in natura neque in personis; probatur: quia natura ipsa est una et hoc unum, et quelibet persona est una et id ipsum unum, quod natura.

25. Cum dicitur; Simon diligis me plus hiis? sensus est, id est, plusquam istos, et bene quidem, sed non perfecte. In primo enim et secundo et plus et minus et gradus est et ordo, in uno autem nec gradus est nec ordo. Qui igitur diligit deum plus quam proximum, bene quidem, sed nondum perfecte.

26. Omnes creature sunt unum purum nichil: non dico, quod sint quid modicum vel aliquid, sed quod sint unum purum nichil.

Objectum preterea extitit dicto Ekardo, quod predicaverat alios duos articulos sub hiis verbis:

1. Aliquid est in anima, quod est increatum et increabile; si tota anima esset talis, esset increata et increabilis, et hoc est intellectus.

2. Quod deus non est bonus neque melior neque optimus; ita male dico, quandocunque voco deum bonum, ac si ego album vocarem nigrum.

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